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1916

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THE MAN WHO STAYED
AT HOME

THE MAN WHO STAYED AT HOME

A PLAY IN THREE ACTS

By
J. E. HAROLD TERRY
AND
LECHMERE WORRALL

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JUN 15 1916

no 1

PEOPLE OF THE PLAY

(In order of appearance)

JOHN PRESTON, J.P.	FRITZ.
MISS MYRTLE.	MIRIAM LEE
FRAULEIN SCHROEDER.	CHRISTOPHER BRENT.
PERCIVAL PENNICUIK.	MRS. SANDERSON.
DAPHNE KIDLINGTON.	CARL SANDERSON.
MOLLY PRESTON.	CORPORAL ATKINS.

SCENE.—*The private sitting-room of the Proprietress of the
"Wave Crest" Hotel, F——, East Anglia.*

ACT I.—*After Breakfast.*

ACT II.—*After Tea.*

ACT III.—

SCENE 1.—*After Dinner.*

SCENE 2.—*Three hours later.*

*The action of the play passes in fifteen hours, on a certain
day in September, 1914.*

The number of *The Play Pictorial* dealing with "THE MAN WHO STAYED AT HOME," giving numerous illustrations of the scene and characters when the play was performed at the Royalty Theatre, London, can be obtained from *The Play Pictorial*, 6, Adam Street, Strand, London, price one shilling and threepence.

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The wigs and properties which are used in the performance of "THE MAN WHO STAYED AT HOME" may be hired from Charles H. Fox, Ltd., 27, Wellington Street, Strand, London, W.C.

Produced at the Royalty Theatre, London, on December 10, 1914, with the following cast :—

CHRISTOPHER BRENT	. . . .	<i>Mr. Dennis Eadie.</i>
CARL SANDERSON	. . . .	<i>Mr. Malcolm Cherry.</i>
JOHN PRESTON, J.P.	. . . .	<i>Mr. Hubert Harben.</i>
PERCIVAL PENNICUIK	. . . .	<i>Mr. Stanley Logan.</i>
FRITZ	. . . .	<i>Mr. E. Henry Edwards.</i>
CORPORAL ATKINS	. . . .	<i>Mr. Campbell Gullan.</i>
MRS. SANDERSON	. . . .	<i>Mrs. Robert Brough.</i>
MIRIAM LEIGH	. . . .	<i>Miss Ruth MacKay.</i>
MOLLY PRESTON	. . . .	<i>Miss Isobel Elsom.</i>
MISS MYRTLE	. . . .	<i>Miss Jaen Cadell.</i>
FRAULEIN SCHROEDER	. . . .	<i>Miss Mary Jerrold.</i>
DAPHNE KIDLINGTON	. . . .	<i>Miss Elizabeth Risdon.</i>

And transferred to the Apollo Theatre on March 20, 1916, with the following cast :—

CRISTOPHER BRENT	. . . .	<i>Mr. Stanley Logan.</i>
CARL SANDERSON	. . . .	<i>Mr. Frank Woolfe.</i>
JOHN PRESTON, J.P.	. . . .	<i>Mr. Sydney Paxton.</i>
PERCIVAL PENNICUIK	. . . .	<i>Mr. P. Perceval Clark.</i>
FRITZ	. . . .	<i>Mr. V. Tarver Penna.</i>
CORPORAL ATKINS	. . . .	<i>Mr. Robert Taylor.</i>
MRS. SANDERSON	. . . .	<i>Mrs. Robert Brough.</i>
MIRIAM LEIGH	. . . .	<i>Miss Ruth MacKay.</i>
MOLLY PRESTON	. . . .	<i>Miss Stella Jesse.</i>
MISS MYRTLE	. . . .	<i>Miss Edith Evans.</i>
FRAULEIN SCHROEDER	. . . .	<i>Miss Esme Hubbard.</i>
DAPHNE KIDLINGTON	. . . .	<i>Miss Norah Balfour.</i>

The Fee for the representation of this play by Amateurs is Five Guineas, payable in advance to :—

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or their authorized agents, who will issue a written permission for the performance to take place. No representation may be given unless this written authority has first been obtained.

In the event of more than one performance being given, the Fee for the second representation is Four Guineas, and for the third and further representations, Three Guineas. But this reduction only applies when the performances are consecutive (evening following evening, or evening following matinee) and at the same theatre or hall.

“THE MAN WHO STAYED AT HOME”

ACT I

SCENE.—*The private sitting-room of the “Wave Crest” Hotel.*

The setting of this scene requires no detailed description. Its like must be familiar to at least fifty out of every hundred men and women in the country. It is the general rendezvous of the guests in an English sea-side boarding-house, of an order sufficiently superior to justify its assumption of the title of hotel.

It is more or less comfortable, more or less pretentious, and chiefly more than less furnished on the hire purchase system.

At the back of the room is a range of windows opening on to a verandah, from which can be obtained an uninterrupted and very delightful view of the sea. This view is apparent to the audience.

It is a fine morning, early in September, and the sun, hovering above the sea, sends its beams dancing into the room, by way of the open windows.

The curtain rises. The stage is occupied by three persons, JOHN PRESTON, MISS MYRTLE and FRAULEIN SCHROEDER.

The first of these, JOHN PRESTON, is a British manufacturer, undeviatingly true to type Everything

about him bespeaks the well-to-do Tory, and eminently respectable Churchman. He is aged 56.

MISS MYRTLE is a maiden lady of uncertain age, and unprepossessing appearance. Her counterpart is to be seen in every seaside boarding-house from John o' Groats to Land's End, and need not be more minutely specified.

FRAULEIN SCHROEDER—as her name indicates—hails from Germany. She has obtained her livelihood for the past twenty years as governess in English households of repute, and can speak our language almost without suspicion of accent, save when she is abnormally excited. She is a tall, angular, and unattractive spinster with a dictatorial manner and entirely unsympathetic soul. She will certainly never see forty again.

The three of them have just left the breakfast-room and are absorbed in a study of their favourite newspapers.

PRESTON stands before the fireplace, scanning the columns of "*The Times*."

MISS MYRTLE has settled herself comfortably upon the chesterfield, and peruses, with studious attention, the social announcements in "*The Morning Post*."

While FRAULEIN SCHROEDER sits stiffly erect upon the chair at the writing-desk, devouring, with a grim relish, "*The Daily Mail*."

PRESTON grunts, MISS MYRTLE sighs, FRAULEIN SCHROEDER clears her throat.

PRESTON (glaring over the top of his paper at FRAULEIN). Well, and what do you think of the news, Fraulein Schroeder?

FRAULEIN. It is sad—most sad.

PRESTON. And it serves your country jolly well right!—Barbarians!

MISS MYRTLE (bridling). My dear Mr. Preston,

pray remember—h'm—(*she indicates* FRAULEIN SCHROEDER)—our friend the enemy.

PRESTON. I consider myself at liberty to make what remarks I like in an English boarding-house.

MISS MYRTLE (*protests*). Please, Mr. Preston!—not a Boarding-House—a Private Hotel.

PRESTON. I, ma'am, call a spade a spade.

MISS MYRTLE (*trying to be very nasty*). Indeed, yes;—and a table-napkin a serviette! (*She shudders.*)

PRESTON. You feel a draught, ma'am?

MISS MYRTLE (*icily*). No—I thank you.

(*A pause.*)

Talking of draughts, Fraulein Schroeder, I must say I felt distinctly hurt that Mrs. Sanderson should have refused my request for a fire here last night. I was frozen to the marrow.

PRESTON. I shouldn't have minded a bit of fire myself. The evenings are growing distinctly chilly.

FRAULEIN. I am sure that Mrs. Sanderson had her reasons—and very good ones—for refusing. You forget, Miss Myrtle, that she offered to light you a fire in your bedroom.

MISS MYRTLE (*distinctly huffy*). And am I to be expected to retire to my bedroom every time I desire to get warm? What next, I should like to know!

FRAULEIN. You must not forget that this is Mr. Sanderson's private room. We use it only by her courtesy.

PRESTON. All that damned——

MISS MYRTLE. Oh!

PRESTON (*continuing*). Er—pardon me—foolish fellow, Brent's fault—letting the bath run over. Never heard of such a thing.

FRAULEIN. I think that Mrs. Sanderson has been most patient, considering the condition of our lounge upstairs. Have you seen the ceiling?

MISS MYRTLE. And the carpet!

PRESTON. Most annoying—most annoying. I felt

positively like a tripper, paddling down the passage in bare feet.

MISS MYRTLE. I put on my goloshes.

PRESTON (*moving R.C.*). Still, we mustn't grumble. (*Glancing round the room.*) Mrs. Sanderson's sanctum is a very excellent substitute for the lounge.

(*He deposits himself in the armchair with a sigh of satisfaction.*)

FRAULEIN. It is much more home-like.

PRESTON. Yes.

(*A pause—before PRESTON glances up from his paper, crushes it in his hands—by way of giving emphasis to his indignation—and, springing to his feet, exclaims furiously—*)

Good heavens !

(*FRAULEIN and MISS MYRTLE raise startled heads above their newspapers.*)

This is perfectly outrageous ! Here's a spy been caught loitering near some reservoirs, and they haven't shot him—haven't even imprisoned him ! Can you believe it possible ? They've discharged him with a caution !

(*He crushes the paper into a ball and flings it with violence into the fireplace.*)

(*MISS MYRTLE rises, and, as PRESTON stumps across the room, retrieves his paper from the fireplace. She smooths out its crumpled pages to the best of her ability, folds it anew, and, in silent protest, places it with other papers and magazines upon the centre table. PRESTON meantime has moved to FRAULEIN, and is haranguing her.*)

We're a sentimental lot of idiots !—Probably putting germs into the water.

(*FRAULEIN merely shrugs her shoulders, and turning*

to the desk proceeds to write a letter. MISS MYRTLE endeavours to pour oil upon the troubled waters.)

MISS MYRTLE. Perhaps he was there by accident.

PRESTON (*snorting*). Accident! I ask you, Miss Myrtle, do you loiter about a public-house——

MISS MYRTLE (*enormously indignant*). Really, Mr. Preston——!

PRESTON. Well, well, you know what I mean—a public-place—by accident? Of course he wasn't there by accident! Even if he was, I wouldn't believe it. I wouldn't trust a German the length of my nose—I'd——

MISS MYRTLE. Mr. Preston, if you will not consider Fraulein Schroeder's feelings, I must beg of you, at least, to consider mine.

FRAULEIN (*looking up from her letter*). Please do not harass Mr. Preston. I do not mind his remarks about the war. Why should I? Am I not naturalized these twenty years?

PRESTON (*returning to the charge*). Exactly—exactly—and you will agree with me, ma'am, that a more thieving—lying——!

MISS MYRTLE. Mr. Preston, once more I must beg of you to remember that I have just finished my breakfast, and that I wish to digest it in peace.

PRESTON. I ask your pardon, ma'am. I was unaware that you were a martyr to dyspepsia!

(*He snatches up "The Times" again from the table, and sitting R. of table, buries himself behind its pages.*)

MISS MYRTLE (*too indignant for words*). Oh!

(*With a hand trembling with indignation she shakes out the pages of "The Morning Post" and strives to forget her wrath in the absorbing interest of its columns.*)

(FRAULEIN SCHROEDER, too, having sealed up her letter, takes up "The Daily Mail" again and the

ghost of a smile hovers about her lips. The scene resumes the aspect that it had on the opening of the act.)

(The brief silence that succeeds is broken by the step of PERCIVAL PENNICUIK upon the verandah, and by the cheery ring of his voice. PENNICUIK is known, wherever he is known, as an "awfully decent fellow." He is not particularly gifted in any especial direction. He is an average English youth, fonder of cricket and of football than he is of books, and he has all the prejudices of his kind. He is a clean-living lad with a fine sense of honour, and nearly everybody likes him on first sight. When the call for men was made he was one of the very first to volunteer, and this explains his curious attire—Norfolk jacket, khaki breeches, puttees, and abnormally thick boots. He wears, too, a polo collar and an "Old Martonian" tie, and carries a soft felt hat in his hand. His face is as bronzed as that of an African Explorer, and he is the picture of health and physical fitness.)

(He appears at the window, and, finding it closed, taps upon the panes.)

PRESTON *(looking up from his newspaper)*. What's that?

(PENNICUIK taps again. PRESTON looks round, sees PENNICUIK, and going to the window, opens it.)

Oh, it's you, Pennicuk.

PENNICUIK. I say, can I come in this way? Or must I go round to the front door?

PRESTON *(taking his arm, and bringing him down R.C.)*. Come in, my boy, of course, come in. Molly told me we should be seeing you. *(As he shakes hands with him.)* Glad to hear you've put your services at the disposal of your country.

PENNICUIK. Well, of course, one has to do one's bit.

PRESTON. Exactly, exactly. That's the spirit—

the right spirit—the spirit that's animating the country through and through. I'm proud of you, Pennicuik. Let's see—what's your regiment?

PENNICUIK. 39th County of London—the Bohemians.

PRESTON. Bohemians, eh? Ah!—a crack corps! What have they made you?

(He moves away L. of PENNICUIK, and regards him with admiration.)

PENNICUIK. Oh, I'm only a Tommy.

PRESTON. And all the more credit to you. Start at the bottom, and work your way up, that's always been my motto. *(He lays his hand on PENNICUIK's shoulder.)* Every soldier carries a field-marshal's baton in his knapsack, you know.

(A discreet cough from MISS MYRTLE—who rises, and comes down L.C.—awakens him to the fact that he has neglected to introduce PENNICUIK to the assembled company.)

PRESTON. Oh, I beg your pardon—let me introduce you—Miss Myrtle, Mr. Pennicuik—

(PENNICUIK crosses to her. They shake hands and talk together for a second, whilst PRESTON considers the manner in which he shall introduce FRAULEIN SCHROEDER. Finally he decides :—)

Miss—er—Smith, Mr. Pennicuik.

(FRAULEIN rises in outraged astonishment, and faces PRESTON.)

FRAULEIN. Smeeth? You meestake. It is Schroeder, my name, Mr. Preston.

PRESTON. Eh?—Oh, well, of course, if you prefer it. But I thought that—er—being naturalized and so on—you might—er—

FRAULEIN. I am not ashamed of my ancestry, Mr. Preston.

PRESTON. No, no, of course—very right and proper sentiments—but—er—in the circumstances, I really couldn't have blamed you if you had been. You hear, Pennicuik,—Fraulein Schroeder.

(He turns away disgustedly R., moves to the windows and closes them, then drops down L. to fireplace.)

FRAULEIN *(to PENNICUIK)*. How do you do? *(Shaking hands with him.)* You have turned soldier, eh? For that I congratulate you. But why you not wear uniform?

PENNICUIK. Can't get 'em. There's been such a rush of fellows to enlist that they can't keep pace with 'em at all. I don't mind. It's a good opportunity to wear out some old clothes.

FRAULEIN. But suppose the Germans get over here, suppose they capture you, and you have no uniform, what then?—they shoot you!

MISS MYRTLE *(comes C.)*. Ah, yes, I fear they are dreadfully unscrupulous.

PENNICUIK *(with overwhelming confidence)*. You've got to catch your hare before you cook him, you know. The Kaiser isn't over here yet, and he's not likely to be—unless he comes as a prisoner.

(PRESTON laughs.)

Anyhow, I'm quite willing to take the risk.

FRAULEIN *(compelled to admiration albeit half cynical)*. What a spirit.

(She returns to the desk—Warning bugle.)

PRESTON. Yes, indeed! It's *the* spirit!—the right spirit—the spirit that's animating the country through and through.

MISS MYRTLE. I think you said that before.

PRESTON. Quite probably I did, ma'am, and quite probably I shall say it again!

(FRAULEIN crosses to the chesterfield and sits down.)

MISS MYRTLE. I'm afraid you will.

(*She also moves up to the chesterfield, and sits down*
L. of FRAULEIN.)

PRESTON. Sit down, my boy, sit down.

(PENNICUIK *takes out a chair left of table.*)

PENNICUIK. Molly said something in her letter about Christopher Brent being down here, too.

PRESTON (*grunts*). Yes.

PENNICUIK (*quite genuinely puzzled*). Well, isn't he doing anything? Taking a commission, or something of that sort?

PRESTON. Haven't heard him say anything about it.

PENNICUIK. Oh—well, I expect there's some very good reason why he hasn't. He can't be an outsider. Molly wouldn't have—(*He says the next word with difficulty*)—liked him as she does, if he had been. P'raps it's his sight. He wears an eyeglass, doesn't he?

PRESTON. Sheer affectation!

FRAULEIN. Has it not occurred to you as possible that Mr. Brent has not the brains?

PRESTON. It's never occurred to me to think of brains at all in connection with Brent. But what have brains got to do with it? Brent's big enough and healthy enough—and that's all that's required of a soldier.

PENNICUIK (*in mock protest*). Oh, I say!

PRESTON. Well—er—all that would be required of Brent if he was a soldier! This is the very first time that I've expressed my feelings upon the subject to anybody—but I feel bound to say that, much as I like Brent in many ways, I consider it perfectly abominable that a healthy young fellow like he is should not be serving his country at this crisis—perfectly abominable.

MISS MYRTLE. I entirely agree with you, Mr. Preston.

PENNICUIK (*eager to change the subject*). Oh, by-

the-way, what of the new arrival? Molly told me that you were expecting a merry widow to be added to your happy throng last night.

PRESTON. Oh yes, yes. Mrs. Lee. A very charming woman——

(He catches MISS MYRTLE'S eye.)

so far as one can judge of her at the moment—very charming. Brent's monopolized her, of course. I left him breathing banalities to her over the marmalade.

(The sound of a bugle call, penetrating through the windows, arrests PENNICUIK'S attention. He glances at his wrist-watch, and moving up to the window looks out of it.)

MISS MYRTLE. I must say that, seeing they met last night for the first time, the terms of intimacy upon which they appear this morning are most noticeable.

PRESTON. Brent is certainly putting the lady in a most invidious position.

MISS MYRTLE. I should have thought that you would have known, as a man of the world, Mr. Preston, that if it takes two to make a quarrel, it takes two, also, to make—er—well, the other thing.

PENNICUIK *(at the window)*. Oh Lord! here comes Daphne Kidlington!

(MISS MYRTLE rises, and crosses, above PENNICUIK, to the window.)

FRAULEIN. What? That chatter-chatter girl again!

PRESTON. Damn!

(He wheels his armchair round, so that he sits with his back to the window, and buries himself behind his newspaper.)

MISS MYRTLE. What an unseemly hour to make a call.

PENNICUIK. She's after something, I'll bet my boots. She's not going to corner me this morning. I'm off to drill.

(*He opens the windows, and is about to go out, when PRESTON turns, and checks him.*)

PRESTON. Hi! Come back there, you young ruffian! You can't go without saying "How de do" to Molly.

PENNICUIK. Oh, all right. (*He returns reluctantly, and drops down R. above the desk.*)

(*DAPHNE KIDLINGTON enters by way of the verandah. She is a gushing young person of the type that normal men fly from, and curates rarely escape marrying. She carries a small basket bristling with white feathers.*)

DAPHNE (*coming C.*). Good morning, everybody. ("Everybody" responds in varying tones of unenthusiasm.)

MISS MYRTLE (*as she closes the window*). My dear Miss Kidlington, pardon my curiosity, but what is it that you've got in that basket?

DAPHNE (*displaying her wares*). Feathers—white feathers.

MISS MYRTLE. Yes, I perceive that. But what are they for?

DAPHNE (*coming L.C.*). I'm going to present one to every young man I meet who hasn't enlisted.

PENNICUIK (*grinning*). Going to decorate the chaps who are *on* the front instead of *at* the front, eh?

DAPHNE (*down L.*). My mission is too serious to be treated frivolously, Mr. Pennicuik.

(*She turns away from him. MISS MYRTLE comes to top of table C. DAPHNE proceeds to dig PRESTON out from behind his newspaper.*)

Oh, there you are, Mr. Preston. I just looked in to see if Molly would come with me.

(PRESTON rises, and returns, with emphasis—)

PRESTON. Certainly not.

(He pushes his chair up stage and stands before the fireplace.)

DAPHNE (in tones of amazement). Certainly not ! I thought you were a patriot.

PRESTON. So I am, but—er——

MISS MYRTLE (at c.). You'd better be careful, Mr. Preston.

DAPHNE. Oh, of course, if you don't wish her to go, there's nothing further to be said.

(She turns away petulantly, and moves up above the table to L. of MISS MYRTLE.)

PRESTON. Exactly.

(Warning clock strikes.)

DAPHNE. Does anybody happen to know if Mrs. Sanderson's son has enlisted ?

FRAULEIN (still on the chesterfield). He has not. Carl has no occasion.

PRESTON. My dear girl, don't you make a bloomer over young Sanderson ! He's in the Admiralty !

DAPHNE. How stupid of me. I remember now, of course—(to FRAULEIN)—but we see so little of him.

MISS MYRTLE (dropping down R. of table to PENNICUIK). He's down for the week-end—such a nice, quiet young man ; and he holds quite a responsible position.

PENNICUIK. Deputy transport clerk, isn't he ? —been up to his neck in work lately, I'll bet.

DAPHNE (moving down again to PRESTON). What about Mr. Brent ? Of course he's going to join something.

PRESTON (uncomfortably). H'm—er—I don't think he's definitely decided at present—but I shouldn't be too hasty, Miss Kidlington.

(PENNICUIK *crosses up to window. He, also, is none too comfortable.*)

PENNICUIK. I say, do you think Molly'll be much longer? I really must hook it in a second.

PRESTON (*consulting his watch*). No, I can't think why she isn't back now. She's only gone to the post-office to send a telegram.

PENNICUIK (*coming down R.*). All right, I'll wait another five minutes. That'll just give me time to get to the parade ground. Are you coming down later to have a look at us? Molly's promised to inspect the battalion this morning.

PRESTON. Then I'll come with her.

(*He crosses C. to PENNICUIK.*)

PENNICUIK. Good!

DAPHNE (*crossing to fireplace*). Such dear, nice boys they are!

PENNICUIK. You mustn't be too critical of our marching. Most of us belong to the sore-foot brigade at present.

PRESTON. I expect so—poor fellows!

MISS MYRTLE (*down R.*). I have heard, Mr. Pennicui, that an excellent remedy is to pickle the feet in a strong solution of salt.

PENNICUIK. By Jove, that's an idea! That'd make us real hot stuff—a sort of Chutney Brigade!

(PENNICUIK *laughs, and so does everybody else, with the single exception of MISS MYRTLE.*

(*The clock in the hall strikes the half-hour.*)

(PRESTON *takes PENNICUIK up R. to window.*)

(*Enter FRITZ, a short and thick-set man of Teutonic appearance. He wears the soiled evening dress suit which has become the livery of the waiter, and speaks with a distinct German accent.*)

FRITZ (*R. of door. To FRAULEIN*). Madam sent

her compliments, Fraulein, and would like to see if you could shpeak mit her.

FRAULEIN (*rising*). I will come immediately.

(*She goes out. FRITZ is about to follow her when PRESTON turns from the window, and addresses him.*)

PRESTON. Oh, by the way, Fritz, you might take my brown boots into my bedroom, will you?

FRITZ. Certainly, sare.

(*He goes out.*)

DAPHNE (*at fireplace*). I suppose Fritz has registered?

PRESTON (*coming R.C.*). Dear me, no—there's no necessity. He's Dutch.

MISS MYRTLE. And naturalized—a most loyal young man—only yesterday I heard him whistling the Marseillaise.

(*She pronounces it "Marsirlays."*)

DAPHNE (*pondering*). H'm—then why hasn't he enlisted?

PRESTON (*impatiently*). And who's going to attend to this place if he does? A little discrimination, my dear young lady, a little discrimination.

(*He turns back to the windows and looks out of them.*)

Ah, there's Molly—(*He opens the windows*)—been staying to feed the pigeons, I expect.

DAPHNE (*sitting in the armchair L.*). What a good thing Mrs. Sanderson's English.

MISS MYRTLE. Why?

DAPHNE. They'd be certain to confiscate her pigeons if she wasn't.

MISS MYRTLE. Oh!—and she's so devoted to them!

PRESTON (*turning from the windows, and coming R.C.*). H'm! Makes excellent pies of 'em, I must say. Come along, Molly.

(MOLLY enters. *She is a fresh and charming girl, high-spirited and full of fun, and very good indeed to look upon. She is just twenty-one, and having been taught from earliest youth to regard her father as infallible, finds it very difficult ever to go against his ruling.*)

(PRESTON closes the windows behind her.)

MOLLY (*seeing PENNICUIK and coming immediately down R. to him—with enthusiasm*). Hullo, Percy! It is nice to see you—and how fit you're looking. Oh—but what a disappointment—you're not in uniform.

PRESTON (*coming C. above table*). Never mind, Molly. It's not the coat that makes the man. It's—er—it's—er——

(*He hesitates.*)

PENNICUIK (*coming to the rescue*). The puttees, eh?

DAPHNE (*moving C. below table—in much aggrieved tones*). Good morning, Molly.

MOLLY (*coming up to her*). Oh, good morning, Daphne. I was so excited at seeing Percy that I never noticed you.

DAPHNE. You've been a long time feeding the pigeons.

MOLLY. I haven't, I daren't. Fritz is so careful of them that nobody is allowed to feed them but himself. (*Her eye falls on DAPHNE'S basket.*) Gracious me! What on earth are the feathers for?

DAPHNE. I'm going recruiting on the front. Every young and able-bodied man who *hasn't*—gets one!

MOLLY. How very foolish of you, Daphne!

DAPHNE (*amazed*). Foolish?

MOLLY. And cruel—and impertinent!

(*She turns to PENNICUIK. They go up to the window.*)

DAPHNE (*aghast*). Really!

PRESTON (*at fire*). I entirely agree with you, my dear.

DAPHNE (*going up to him*). I feel it to be my duty, and I shall do it. (*She turns away c.*) More than half the girls in the Tennis Club have decided to do exactly the same thing!

PRESTON. Ten fools won't make one wise woman! There are many other ways, Miss Kidlington, in which you and your friends could be more profitably employed.

MISS MYRTLE. Knitting comforters, for instance.

PRESTON. Precisely.

DAPHNE (*as she comes up to him. Half crying*). I'm very sorry I came here this morning. I think you're all very unsympathetic and very rude. But at least *I'm* not a coward—I've made up my mind to do this, and do it I shall!

(*At this psychological moment, CHRISTOPHER BRENT'S voice is heard outside. A gleam of satisfaction comes into DAPHNE'S eye.*)

BRENT (*off stage*). I expect we shall find them all in here.

DAPHNE. Ah!

(*She moves towards the door as CHRISTOPHER BRENT enters the room, preceded by MIRIAM LEE.*)

(BRENT is a clean-shaven, eye-glassed man of thirty-two or three. In ordinary conversation he affects the languid drawl that is popularly associated with a monocle, but this he uses solely as a mask, and when occasion offers for him to be his natural self he discards the pose entirely.)

(MIRIAM LEE, widowed before she was thirty, is a woman of the world, whose great charm arises from her gift of ready and genuine sympathy. She has suffered much, and can understand much. She is still quite young—not more than thirty-five—and pretty enough to be a formidable rival even to the

most attractive of débutantes. She is very quiet and undemonstrative in manner—and speaks always in a low and beautifully modulated voice. BRENT holds the door open for her. She crosses to MOLLY and is duly introduced to PENNYCUK.)

BRENT (*very cheerily*). Hello, everybody! By Jove, I say, isn't it a jolly mornin' for the war, what? Hello, Miss Kidlin'ton, how are you? Still bearin' up, eh?

(*His eye lights on PENNICUIK. They shake hands and go down R.C. below table.*)

Ah, there's the General. Didn't notice you come smartly to attention when I entered, me lad; still, we'll overlook it this time. Well, how are things going with you? Fat old sergeants still damnin' your eyes, and castin' nasturtiums on your paternity, or are we now a corporal and immune?

PENNICUIK. Oh, Lord, no, I shan't get my stripes for ages.

BRENT. Except those of affliction, eh?

(*He laughs and turns away C.*)

(*DAPHNE KIDLINGTON stands by his elbow, and thrusts her basket of feathers almost immediately beneath his nose. An atmosphere of acute discomfort overspreads the room.*)

(*As DAPHNE comes C., MOLLY crosses down to PRESTON at fire.*)

BRENT. By Jove, what a jolly lot of little pipe-cleaners!

(*PENNICUIK laughs.*)

DAPHNE. Mr. Brent, I have a serious question to ask you.

BRENT. Not really?

MOLLY (*coming to DAPHNE and laying a restraining hand on her arm*). Daphne! How can you?—now!

BRENT. Oh, don't stop her—please! Miss Kidlin'ton looks so—so awfully jolly when she's serious.

DAPHNE. Mr. Brent, have you enlisted?

BRENT. No!

DAPHNE. Are you going to?

BRENT. No—can't say I am, or can, for the matter of that.

DAPHNE (*drawing a feather from the basket*). Then

(*There is a general movement of disgust from all.*)

MOLLY. Daphne!

(*She does her best to prevent what follows.*)

BRENT (*taking the feather*). Oh, please don't worry, Miss Preston, it's only a feather!

(*MOLLY turns back to her father.*)

DAPHNE. Only a feather, as you say, Mr. Brent; but please notice the colour.

(*Another general movement from all.*)

BRENT. Oh! the colour don't matter at all. Thanks awfully, all the same. (*He pulls a pipe from his pocket.*) I've been looking for one of these little fellows all the morning. (*He thrusts the feather through the stem.*) By Jove, that's top hole. Tell you what, Miss Kidlington, I'll bid you a sovereign for the lot, and you can give it to—to the Prince of Wales' Fund or whatever you like. Is it a bargain?

DAPHNE (*striving hard to look and to feel dignified*). Mr. Brent, you don't know me.

BRENT. My dear young lady, if you're not jolly careful, I'm afraid you'll soon find that nobody knows you.

(*He moves over to the desk, and drops the feather in the waste-paper basket beside it.*)

(*MOLLY moves up stage to the door.*)

(*A strained silence succeeds, broken at length by*
PENNICUIK.)

PENNICUIK (*flinging out of the room*). Well, so long, everybody. (*As he passes MOLLY.*) Expect you on the parade-ground in half an hour.

MOLLY (*keeping her eye on DAPHNE*). All right.

(PENNICUIK *goes out, and DAPHNE turns to PRESTON, who avoids meeting her eye.*)

PRESTON. Well, I want a walk. I'll just go and put on my boots.

(*He follows PENNICUIK hastily.*)

(DAPHNE *moves up to MISS MYRTLE, who pretends to be too engaged in searching through her work-basket to notice her.*)

(DAPHNE *pauses irresolutely for a moment, then goes to the door, hesitates, and eventually turns to BRENT.*)

DAPHNE (*defiant, if horribly uncomfortable*). I hope you understand, Mr. Brent, that I've only done what I feel to be my duty.

MOLLY (*in a furious aside to her as she holds open the door*). For Heaven's sake, stop making a fool of yourself, and go!

DAPHNE. Oh, of course, if I'm not wanted——!

MOLLY. You're not.

DAPHNE. Oh!

(*She, too, flings out in a tantrum, taking her feathers with her.*)

BRENT (*still busily engaged in loading his pipe*). What a jolly time all the fellows are going to have on the beach!

(*He crosses to below the table.*)

MOLLY (*as she closes the door with a vicious snap*). Vulgar little beast!

(MISS MYRTLE *rises, and moves to L. of table.*)

MISS MYRTLE (*with a certain hesitation*). Mr. Brent, it has been most painful to me to witness your ordeal.

BRENT (*seemingly entirely unmoved*). My dear lady, when your pipe won't draw—take my tip—use a feather. It's a godsend! (*He crosses L.*)

MISS MYRTLE (*icily as she draws herself up*). H'm—yes—I suppose so. (*She moves up to the door, then turns.*) At the same time I trust that the symbolic significance of the token will not escape you.

(*She exits after the manner of an indignant turkey.*)

BRENT (*with exaggerated drawl, as he blows down the stem of his pipe*). By Jove, that's a nasty one, isn't it?

MOLLY (*dropping down to top of table*). Christopher, how can you?

BRENT. How can I what, little woman?

MOLLY. Take it lying down!

(BRENT *merely shrugs his shoulders and MIRIAM replies—*)

MIRIAM (*coming R.C.*). Surely, Miss Preston, such blatant ill-breeding is beneath contempt?

MOLLY (*very near to tears*). Yes, I know—only—only——

(*Her lip trembles. The tears will no longer be denied. She turns and goes hurriedly from the room.*)

(MIRIAM *follows her to the door and closes it after her.*)

BRENT (*at fireplace. To MIRIAM*). I say, do you think I'd better go after her? (*He lays his pipe unlit upon the mantelshelf.*)

MIRIAM (*down to R. of table*). No, I should leave her to herself for a minute or two. Let her have her cry out. She'll feel all the better for it. J

(*She puts her bag on the table.*)

BRENT. Poor little kid! That's the one rotten

part of all this business. It's such jolly hard lines on her.

MIRIAM. You're not engaged, are you?

BRENT. Not officially: The old man doesn't exactly cotton to the idea; but it's an understood thing none the less.

MIRIAM (*coming below table to c.*). Have you counted the cost? It's going to be terribly hard for both of you.

BRENT (*shortly*). I know.

(*He drops into the armchair L.*)

MIRIAM (*moving over to R. of him*). What's going to happen when she comes up against this part of your life—this vital part of it—that must always remain to her a sealed book?

BRENT (*with exasperated impatience*). Oh! "Sufficient unto the day!"

MIRIAM (*slowly and with emphasis*). Poor girl—and poor you!

BRENT (*rising with one foot on the fender-stool*). Oh, do stop croaking—there's a dear woman! I'm not in the mood for it.

MIRIAM. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to croak. But—well, you know, Kit, just how fond I am of you, and I can't bear the thought of things going wrong with you. (*She crosses in front of table.*) If you knew how my blood boiled just now when that—that creature insulted you! I could have killed her—gladly. You were perfectly splendid, but I could see how it hurt you—hurt you just as deeply as it hurt that poor little girl. And you were powerless to justify yourself. Oh, it was hard—cruelly hard! (*At c.*)

BRENT (*turning to her—with difficulty*). It's jolly nice of you to say that, Miriam—and I appreciate it. But I've got nothing to grouse about it. It's all in the day's work. I knew what I was in for when I took this thing on, and I've got to see it through.

(A pause. BRENT crosses to her c.)

But I say, look here, we mustn't chatter any more about ourselves. We must get to work at once. Have you got those particulars I wired to you for?

MIRIAM. Yes, they're here.

(She opens her bag which is upon the table, and takes some papers from it. These she gives to BRENT. Then, leaving her bag where it is, she seats herself R. of table.)

BRENT. Good!

(He crosses over to the fireplace, glancing through the papers, then a sudden thought strikes him, and he comes back to MIRIAM.)

By the way, nobody has the least idea that we've met before, and—of course, they mustn't have.

MIRIAM (with a smile as if the caution were unnecessary). This isn't the first time that we've worked together, Kit.

BRENT. No, and I jolly well hope it won't be the last.

(BRENT sits L. of table, and a pause ensues, whilst he examines the documents that MIRIAM has given to him. Suddenly he looks up from them with an exclamation.)

BRENT. By Jove, but this is interesting—widow of the late General von Mantel, eh? (Meditatively.) Von Mantel? Wasn't he the chap who wrote that book in defence of spies?

MIRIAM. That's the man. He was the greatest German expert in the art of espionage; and maintained that the end justified any means employed.

BRENT. H'm! So it's his widow we're up against, are we? She oughtn't to be any fool at the game.

MIRIAM. I don't expect she is.

BRENT. I wonder how she got hold of her second

husband—Sanderson. She's German herself, isn't she?

MIRIAM. Very much so. She was born in Dresden.

BRENT. Well, anyhow—poor devil!—he didn't endure her long. By the way, when were they married? (*Consults the paper.*) August '97. Then that chap, Carl, must be von Mantel's son—and not Sanderson at all. (*He whistles and, rising, crosses to the fireplace.*) Phew! This grows exciting.

(*A pause.*)

What about the waiter, Fritz?

MIRIAM. I couldn't discover much about him. He appears to be Dutch all right, and naturalized—but, of course, it's more than probable that he is in their pay.

(*Another pause.*)

BRENT. Yes. (*He paces from L. to C. and back.*) Fraulein Schroeder of course doesn't require much explanation.

MIRIAM. She's just one of a thousand—has lived in this country for twenty years or more, and been employed as governess in a dozen of our most exclusive households. Her references are quite exceptional.

BRENT (*at L.C. looking out of window*). They always are.

(*A pause before BRENT inquires suddenly—*)

I say, do you prefer pigeons stewed, or in a pie?

MIRIAM (*stares at him in blank amazement, then laughs*). My dear man, what on earth has that got to do with Fraulein Schroeder?

BRENT. More than meets the eye. Pigeons figure almost daily on the menu of this select establishment. Do you know anything about them?

MIRIAM. About pigeons?

BRENT. Yes.

MIRIAM. A little. My brother used to show them. He won quite a lot of cups.

BRENT. Stout fellow! (*He crosses above table to window.*) Just come here a minute, will you, Miriam? You'll probably be able to tell me what kind of pigeons those are on the lawn there.

MIRIAM (*joining him at the window, i. of him and above him.*) Oh, there are all sorts—mostly tumblers.

BRENT. Any carriers amongst 'em?

MIRIAM. Yes. (*Pointing through window with l. hand.*) That's a carrier over there—that dark-coloured bird in the corner by himself. You can always tell a carrier by the white rim round his eye.

(*She crosses to l. and sits herself upon the Chesterfield.*)

BRENT. Can you indeed? That's jolly interesting. I shall have to get you to give me some lessons in pigeonology—or whatever you call it. . . . Tell me, could you fetch one down with an airgun?

MIRIAM. I don't know. Why?

BRENT. Well, I'm rather a crack shot with an airgun. Always travel one.

(*He walks over to a corner in which is propped what is, to all intents and purposes, a walking-stick. In reality it is an airgun disguised. He removes the ferrule—thus disclosing the mouth of the barrel, and opens the breach which is situated immediately below the silver band ornamenting the "stick."*)

Here's my pet possession. Clever, isn't it?

MIRIAM. I've tumbled at last, Kit—sorry to be so dense.

BRENT. That's all right—but just keep an observant eye upon those little dicky-birds. (*He puts the gun back in the corner.*) They've really got most entertaining habits.

MIRIAM. I'll make a special study of them—starting at once. (*She turns as if to go.*)

BRENT. By the way, my man met you at the station, didn't he?

MIRIAM. Yes.

BRENT. Well, didn't he give you something to bring down for me?

MIRIAM. Oh, yes—I forgot—a book.

(She drops down L. side of table.)

(BRENT drops down R. of table.)

(MIRIAM opens her bag and takes from it a small book which she hands to him.)

MIRIAM. That's it.

BRENT. Yes, that's it.

MIRIAM *(below table)*. What is it?

(BRENT sits on the table, and glances round cautiously before replying.)

BRENT. A complete key to all the codes used by German spies in their various methods of communication.

MIRIAM. How on earth did you get hold of it?

BRENT. That's rather too long a story to tell you just now. But I assure you that the Kaiser's Intelligence Department didn't make me a present of it.

(He crosses to the desk, turning over the pages of the book as he goes. MIRIAM turns up stage L.)

MIRIAM. I shall never rest content until you've told me the whole history of it. *(She breaks off and listens.)* Isn't that somebody coming?

BRENT. If it's Molly, leave us together for a minute, will you? But come back later. I'll look out for you in about a quarter of an hour.

(He strolls back to L. of table and sits.)

(MIRIAM nods acquiescence, and is about to go out by the window when MOLLY enters by the door.)

MOLLY. Are you going out, Mrs. Lee?

MOLLY. No.

BRENT. Well, you see, the fact is, I've trotted about such a lot that all places seem much of a muchness to me.

MOLLY. What were you doing in South Africa?

BRENT. What was I doing in South Africa? Let's see—oh yes, I remember. I went out there with another fellow who had some rotten scheme about diamonds. It never came off, so—(*lamely*)—I came back.

(MOLLY looks at him doubtingly. She moves slowly to the window, and watches MRS. LEE'S retreating figure.)

MOLLY (*meditatively*). She's very fascinating.

BRENT. Who is?

MOLLY. Mrs. Lee.

BRENT. Oh, yes—rather.

(MOLLY turns aside from the window, and comes c. above the table.)

MOLLY. Are you coming out this morning?

(BRENT rises, and takes a step up stage towards her.)

BRENT. Yes, but I'll meet you later on, if I may. There are one or two little things I must attend to, and——

MOLLY (*disappointedly, as she moves towards the door*). Oh, very well.

(She lingers, holding the handle of the door. BRENT is kneeling on top end of the Chesterfield facing her. He speaks wistfully.)

BRENT. I say, Molly, you aren't awfully sick with me, are you?

MOLLY (*sighing*). Oh, I don't know, I—— (*She makes a gesture of indecision.*) Anyway, I suppose you'll play tennis after lunch.

(*She goes out.*)

(BRENT watches her out, sighs deeply, and turns, with wrinkled brow, to take his pipe from the mantel-shelf. He puts the pipe into his mouth, draws a box of matches from his pocket and has just struck a light when FRITZ enters.)

FRITZ (at c. above table). Excuse me, sare, but do you happen to know vere Mistaire Preston ees? Somebody vont him on de delephone.

BRENT (sitting on the fire-stool, as he lights his pipe.) He went upstairs to put his boots on about ten minutes ago.

FRITZ. Thank you, sare.

(He is just about to go when he observes BRENT fling his still lighted match into the grate. With a smothered "Mein Gott" he runs to the fireplace, pushes BRENT aside in his anxiety to snatch the match from the coals.)

BRENT (at c. below table). Here, I say, what the devil are you doin', Fritz? You're not feelin' suddenly unwell, are you?

(FRITZ kneels on the fire-stool, and beats out the flame with his hands. He gives a sigh of relief as he extinguishes it.)

FRITZ. Ah! Dot vos ein narrow squeak!

BRENT. What the blazes are you talkin' about? What was a narrow squeak?

FRITZ. De fire! (He rises.) You nearly light him!

BRENT. Well, what about it? I don't see that there's anythin' to get so—so agitato about. You know, Fritz, you really must learn to control yourself. It's not only bad for the nerves—all this undue excitement—it's such rotten bad form. It isn't done, you know.

FRITZ. But madam—she never permit dis fire to be light!

MOLLY. No.

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BRENT. Then what on earth's the point of havin' it laid?

FRITZ. I cannot tell you, sare.

(Voices are heard off.)

Dat is madam coming. *(He moves to the door.)*
Perhaps she will herself explain.

(BRENT strolls across the stage. He is thinking furiously. FRITZ stands in the doorway, keeping a watchful eye upon him.)

Dere is nodings more dat you require, sare?

BRENT *(crossing to the table and from there to the fireplace)*. No, nothing, thank you. You toddle off and find Mr. Preston.

FRITZ. Very good, sare.

(He goes out unwillingly.)

(BRENT scratches his chin thoughtfully, 'as he peers into the grate. He is clearly puzzled. He speaks his thoughts aloud.)

BRENT *(sotto voce)*. That's funny—dam' funny!

(MRS. SANDERSON, followed by her son CARL, enters by the window. She is a middle-aged woman, well-built and imposing, but with nothing in her manner or appearance that might suggest that she is anything other than that she passes for—the English proprietress of an English boarding-house.)

(CARL SANDERSON is as little likely to be suspected of foreign origin or foreign sympathies as his mother. He is tall and slight—not more than twenty-eight or twenty-nine at most—and his manners, if a trifle off-hand, are none the less quite delightful.

MRS. SANDERSON *(coming down R. of table to desk)*. Ah, Mr. Brent, I don't think you've met my son, have you?

BRENT. No, I haven't had that pleasure. *(To CARL.)* Delighted to meet you.

CARL (*drops down L. of table—gravely, as they shake hands.*) And I, you.

BRENT. Down for long?

CARL. Only the week-end. My chief can't spare me for longer. We're most frightfully busy at the Admiralty.

BRENT. Oh, yes, of course. I forgot you'd a billet there.

(MRS. SANDERSON, *who is running through some letters in her desk, turns to BRENT.*)

MRS. SANDERSON. In the transport department.

BRENT. Ah! Then you're the very man I wanted to see.

CARL (*smiling*). Oh—why?

BRENT. You can really tell us the truth about those Russians.

CARL (*with broader smile*). Perhaps—perhaps not!

BRENT. Ah! Then perhaps I can tell you something. You know I have an aunt at Leamington—awfully jolly old lady. Her housemaid's young man works somewhere near the railway. Well, he has a pall whose greatest friend actually works *on* the railway, and, although he didn't exactly see them himself, he told my aunt's housemaid's young man that a very honest young chap, a friend of his—in the Salvation Army—*had* actually seen them!

MRS. SANDERSON (*laughing*). That proves it.

BRENT (*to CARL*). What do you think?

CARL. Shall I tell you the truth?

BRENT. I wish you would. It's all very worrying, you know.

CARL. Well, they didn't—not a solitary Russian!

BRENT. By Jove, I say, that *is* a blow! I don't know whatever my aunt will say when I tell her. She'll be most awfully upset. I feel quite bowled over myself. It's a nasty jar! I think, if you'll excuse me, I'll just go and send my aunt a telegram.

(*He moves towards the door—to CARL.*) We'll have another little chat about things later on, I hope.

(*He goes out, taking his airgun with him.*)

CARL (*crossing to fireplace*). He's a particular sort of idiot.

MRS. SANDERSON (*moving c. below table*). Yes, "a particular sort of idiot"; but even his particular sort of idiot has potentialities in England.

CARL (*leaning on the mantel, with one foot on the fire-stool*). Yes; they're a wonderful race. . . . You know, mater, sometimes I find it almost impossible to believe that I'm a German.

MRS. SANDERSON (*proudly, as she crosses L.C.*). But you are, my son, and one day you will be a great German, as your father was.

CARL. H'm!—Perhaps!

MRS. SANDERSON (*disturbed by his cynical tone*). Carl! . . . What do you mean?

(*CARL lays a reassuring hand upon her arm, but ignores her question.*)

CARL. Did Fritz get all the despatches through?

MRS. SANDERSON. Yes, all. The fishing-fleet took them.

CARL. Good. How many of the Potsdam carriers has he left?

MRS. SANDERSON (*sitting L. of table*). Two; but one of them's hurt its wing, so the other mustn't be used excepting on a matter of the first importance.

CARL (*moving up to her*). Would you call a map of the English mine-field "of the first importance"?

MRS. SANDERSON (*greatly elated and excited*). My son! How did you get it?

CARL (*nonchalantly, as he takes a paper from his pocket-book and hands it to his mother*). Stayed in one lunch-time—tracing—nothing easier.

(*MRS. SANDERSON rises. A great pride shines from her eyes, and rings in her voice.*)

MRS. SANDERSON. My son, you have rendered your Imperial Master signal service. I am proud of you. *(She takes his head between her hands and kisses him upon the forehead.)*

(A brief pause ensues, the while she masters her emotion. Then she sits down again, and puts the map that he has given her into her bag.)

And now tell me, what about these troops from the North? That is the great question at the moment. Are they coming through?

(Her inquiry seems to trouble CARL. He paces, restlessly, up and down L. of stage.)

CARL. From what I can make out there seems to be no doubt that they're on their way.

MRS. SANDERSON *(amazed by his uncertainty)*. Surely you know?

CARL. That's just it—I don't. My department hasn't touched them. I've done my best, but I can't find out for certain.

MRS. SANDERSON. But they're relying on us for confirmation. What are we to do?

CARL. I've left instructions with Gluckmann that he's to let us have a message here between ten and eleven this morning. *(He consults his watch.)* It's close on ten now.

MRS. SANDERSON. How's he going to communicate?

CARL. Marconi of course.

MRS. SANDERSON. But supposing people are about?

CARL *(impatiently)*. They mustn't be.

(MRS. SANDERSON looks up in amazement at the brusqueness of his tone. CARL observes that it has disturbed her, and, taking her hand, continues more gently—)

This is your private room, mother. I shall rely on you to have the field clear for me in half an hour.

(He moves c. above table, and through the window observes BRENT returning.)

Oh, Lord, here's the particular idiot back again!

MRS. SANDERSON *(crossing to the bookcase L.)*. Well, I must leave him to you, dear. I want to take this book back to the library. *(At the door.)* I shan't be long.

(BRENT enters by the window, pipe in mouth. He carries his airgun.)

BRENT. Ah! Well, I've done it. I've sent her a wire. Poor old auntie!—that'll take away her appetite for lunch.

He chuckles foolishly as he opens the breech of his airgun. The "click" that it makes draws CARL'S attention to it.

CARL. What's the matter? Broken your stick?

BRENT. No. Haven't you seen one of these before? *(He shows CARL the mechanism.)* Neat, isn't it?

CARL. An airgun, eh? That's an ingenious toy.

BRENT. Yes, it's the very latest—but it's no use to me. I can't hit a haystack with it. I've been pottin' at a sittin' sparrow in the garden for the last five minutes and the little beggar didn't so much as bother to look up from his luncheon! You know, I mayn't look it, but I'm a perfect fool at some things. *(He drops down stage R. CARL moves to the door.)*

CARL. Oh, don't say that.

(He turns the handle of the door, and BRENT, who is standing by the desk with his back to him, wheels round at the sound.)

BRENT. I say, you're not goin' too, are you?

CARL. I'm afraid I must. I've brought some work down with me that I must get through this morning.

BRENT (*crossing to the fireplace*). Oh, I say, now, that really is a pity. There were such a lot of things I wanted to ask you about—mines, and those nippy little devils—what d'you call 'em?—submarines—and all that sort o' thing, you know.

CARL (*quite gravely*). I shall be delighted to place myself at your disposal later in the day.

BRENT. You will? Good man. Then that's a bargain. I hope I shan't bore you most frightfully with all my questions.

(*He bends down and knocks the ashes out of his pipe against a tile of the grate just above the hearth.*)

CARL (*looking at him rather strangely*). Not at all. I only hope that I may be able to answer them. Au revoir, Mr. Brent.

BRENT (*assuming an upright position again*). So long—and thanks awfully.

(CARL goes out.)

(BRENT stands thoughtfully rubbing the mouthpiece of his pipe across his teeth. Then he blows down it and finds it choked. Again he knocks the bow against the tiling of the grate, but this time much nearer the mantelpiece. The blow sounds hollow. He looks up quickly, surprised. He bends down, taps the lower tile that he first struck. The sound is "solid." Then he again taps the upper tile, and the difference—the "hollowness" is most marked. He whistles "phew!" puts his pipe in his pocket, takes a box of wooden matches off the mantelpiece, and deliberately scatters several matches on the hearth. Again he kneels down, draws out a tiny electric torch from his vest pocket, and throws a gleam up the chimney, and around the grate. On the alert all the time, he detects the sound of some one approaching the door; he pockets the lamp, hums an air, and, picking up the matches, replaces them in the box.)

(MIRIAM LEE *enters.*)

(BRENT *does not look up.*)

(*Warning revolve grate.*)

MIRIAM (*standing in the open doorway*). Whatever are you doing?

(*She closes the door.*)

BRENT. Spilt a box o' matches—beastly nuisance pickin' 'em up.

MIRIAM. I'm all alone.

(BRENT *springs to his feet immediately.*)

BRENT. Good! . . . Keep a sharp look out of the window, will you?

(*He hastens to the door and locks it.*)

(MIRIAM *glances through the open windows; closes them and turns to him.*)

MIRIAM. Coast quite clear. What is it, Kit?

BRENT (*dropping down stage L.C.*). I'm not sure, but I think I'm on the verge of an interesting discovery. Were you in the room last night when Miss Myrtle asked for a fire, and Mrs. Sanderson refused?

MIRIAM. Yes.

BRENT (*at fireplace*). Didn't it strike you that her refusal was unnecessarily emphatic?

MIRIAM. I didn't notice it at the time, but now you mention it——

BRENT. Exactly. (*He kneels again by the grate and continues his scrutiny.*) I can't say that it was quite that that made me think there must be something very queer about this grate, but I've made a bit of a discovery since—listen! (*He taps the lower tile and then the upper.*) Notice that? (*Taps both again.*) Hear the difference? Iron. Wood. A wooden fireplace. (*Sits on fire-stool.*) And then a few minutes ago I happened to throw a lighted

match on the coals when Fritz was in the room. (*Passing his hands all round the suspected tiles.*) You should have seen him. He was in such an almighty hurry to put it out that I felt certain—ah, by Jingo, that's ingenious.

(*The hidden spring has been discovered, and the entire grate has revolved, bringing into view a complete apparatus for the receipt and despatch of wireless messages.*)

MIRIAM. Whatever have you found?

BRENT. A wireless up the chimney! I knew that flagpole wasn't there for nothing.

MIRIAM. Flagpole?

BRENT. Yes, just by the chimney-stack. That's how they've worked their aerials. Oh, if only I could intercept a message.

MIRIAM. It may be working. Try it.

BRENT. Right. I will.

MIRIAM. But if you do pick up a message, how will you know that it doesn't come from some quite harmless person?

BRENT. A secret installation like this isn't likely to be in tune with more than one other instrument in the country. Anyhow, it's worth trying.

(*He fixes the receiver to his ear.*)

MIRIAM. Rather.

BRENT (*taking the key in his hand*). But, for the Lord's sake, keep a sharp look out!

(*Follows a brief pause before he exclaims—in accents of intense excitement—*)

By Jupiter, it is working! Somebody keeps callin'.

(*He fishes from his pocket the book which MIRIAM, who comes c., has given to him previously, and throws it across to her.*)

Quick, catch! Hunt through that, will you?—and tell me how to signal him to proceed.

MIRIAM. Where shall I look?

BRENT. Try number seven.

MIRIAM. What's the call?

BRENT. Two dots—a pause—and then three dots very quickly.

MIRIAM (*shakes her head, after a hasty exclamation*). That isn't it.

BRENT. Then number nine.

MIRIAM. Two dots—a pause—then three dots quickly. That's what you said, isn't it?

BRENT. That's it.

MIRIAM. Answer: two dashes—a pause—two dots.

BRENT. Good. Just half a minute while I get my notebook. (*He fishes it out of his pocket.*) Now then. (*He gives the signal to proceed.*) Dash dot, four dots again, and dash. (*He enters the record in his notebook.*) Does that make sense?

MIRIAM. Yes, that gives the German word "Morgan."

BRENT. A.I! Just half a minute, and I'll have the whole thing down.

(*A considerable pause.*)

He's stopped. (*He holds out the notebook to MIRIAM.*) What do you make of that?

MIRIAM (*as she crosses to take the book from him*). You'd better signal him to hold—dot—pause—two dots.

BRENT. Right. (*Give the signal.*)

(*MIRIAM sits upon an arm of the armchair, and hastily translates the message by aid of the code-book.*)

MIRIAM (*reading the translation*). "Leith ange-lant heute morgen——"

BRENT (*interrupting*). That's so much double Dutch to me. What does it mean in common or garden English?

MIRIAM. Nothing that's intelligible—on the face of it.

BRENT. Well, what is it?

MIRIAM. Landed Leith this morning—entrain to-night—crossing immediately—Uzz (*pronounced "Oozz"*) awaits signal—what orders?

BRENT. Ye Gods! Then they're not phantoms after all!

MIRIAM. Who aren't?

BRENT. These troops from the North we've heard somuch about. I say, give me a reply. Something short and sweet. Quick!

MIRIAM. A dot—a dash—two dots.

BRENT. What's that mean?

MIRIAM (*placing his notebook on the armchair, and crossing to the window*). In low German—very low—"Run away and play!"

BRENT. Good enough.

(*He taps the message out, and, having done so, takes the receiver from his ears.*)

MIRIAM. So that's why you let the bath run over!—on purpose to get into this room!

(BRENT *smiles broadly.*)

(*Warning return grate to position.*)

MIRIAM. Kit, you're a marvel! But what do you make of it? Do you think they intend to try and stop the transports crossing?

BRENT (*replacing the receiver on its hook*). Something of the sort—and it's ten to one they'll manage it if we can't put a spoke into their wheels. (*He rises from the stool.*) "Uzz"—"Uzz"—what the devil does "Uzz" mean? It's all as clear as daylight except that bit—and that's the one vital part of the whole thing, so far as we're concerned. (*He takes the notebook from the armchair and crosses over to the table.*) Are you sure that you've translated it all right?

MIRIAM. Yes, that's just as you gave it to me. Look here.

(She lays the notebook beside the codebook on the table, and points first to one and then to the other.)

That's what you've put down. And there's the translation—"U—double zed." That's right, isn't it?

BRENT *(slipping the notebook into his pocket)*. Looks like it. So Master Uzz awaits a signal, does he? And before we can prevent him gettin' it, we've got to find out who Master Uzz is, and what is the message he's awaitin'. *(He sits in the armchair.)* A nice little jig-saw for us to tackle after lunch. Point is at the moment what the devil we're to do with all this tackle. *(He indicates the Marconi apparatus.)* Seems a shame to put it out of gear. We might find it so jolly useful. On the other hand so might the enemy. We can't afford to run any risks. Here goes!

(He kneels on the floor beside the instrument, and removes the detector pin.)

MIRIAM *(crossing to L.C.)* What have you done?

BRENT *(as he shows it to her)*. Removed the detector pin—spiked the enemy's gun. *(He puts it in his pocket.)*

MIRIAM *(up L.C. above table)*. There are voices in the garden.

(Warning revolve grate.)

(She goes to the window and throws them open.)

It's the Sandersons.

BRENT. Bless their innocent hearts, they're just ten seconds too late.

(He reverses the grate, and rises to his feet, brushing the dust from his knees.)

I think you'd better clear out. We'll have another pow-wow after lunch. By Jove, Miriam, but we've done great work this morning.

(MIRIAM unlocks the door and goes out.)

(*The SANDERSONS re-enter by the window and find BRENT still standing before the fireplace, again loading his pipe.*)

MRS. SANDERSON (*at the top of table*). What, still here, Mr. Brent?

(*CARL drops down to desk.*)

BRENT. Well—er—only temporarily, as it were. Fact is, I'm just goin' out to get an early morning edition. I've got a sort of feelin' that there's good news in it—a sort of premonition, as it were, and I simply must find out if I'm right. Do you suffer from premonitions, Mrs. Sanderson?

MRS. SANDERSON (*crossing to book-case L. and putting into it a novel which she has just obtained at the library*). No, I don't think so—not more than most people.

BRENT. Don't you, indeed? I do—have done ever since I was—a kid. It's quite amazin' the things I "premonish." Just to give you an example; only the other night I dreamt of running water.

MRS. SANDERSON. Oh! But how very lucky.

BRENT. It's awfully good of you to say that, Mrs. Sanderson, because the very next morning I let the bath run over! (*To CARL.*) Now wasn't that extraordinary?

CARL. Astounding!

BRENT. Yes, I thought you'd be interested. Well, in case I don't get back before, I'll say good-bye till lunch time.

(*He goes out by the door.*)

CARL (*crossing to L.C. below table*). I wonder that chap hasn't got a job in the Intelligence Department!

MRS. SANDERSON. Thank goodness he's gone! That leaves the field quite clear.

CARL. Certain?

MRS. SANDERSON. Certain. They're all out now, excepting Fritz and the cook.

CARL. Better lock the door, perhaps.

MRS. SANDERSON. Very well, dear.

(She does so, and mounts guard at the window.)

(CARL sits on the fire-stool and touches the spring which reverses the grate. He places the receiver to his ears and picks up the key.)

(Warning return grate to position.)

CARL *(after waiting a while)*. H'm! Funny that he isn't calling. P'raps he's waiting for a call from me.

(He signals several times without result.)

What the devil—? *(He signals again impatiently.)*
Damn it! The thing can't be out of order.

(His eye suddenly lights upon the place where BRENT has been tampering with the mechanism. He snatches the receiver from his ears, hangs it on to its hook, and bends down to examine the damage.)

It is though! By God, mater, somebody's been tampering with it. Look here!

MRS. SANDERSON. Impossible!

CARL. I tell you they have. The detector pin's gone. Look here.

MRS. SANDERSON *(down R.C.)*. But it was all right last night, I got your message.

CARL. This has been done this morning.

MRS. SANDERSON. But who can have done it? Nobody knew of the thing besides ourselves—and Fritz.

CARL *(quickly)*. Better ring for Fritz.

MRS. SANDERSON. You surely don't think——?

CARL. I'm going to make sure. *(He lets the grate revert to its normal position.)*

(MRS. SANDERSON presses the electric bell-bush, and then unlocks the door.)

MRS. SANDERSON. What on earth's to be done now?

CARL. I must fly back to town at once.

MRS. SANDERSON (*down to R. of table*). My poor boy!

CARL (*pacing up and down L.*). There's a train at 10.30—gets me up there a little after two. I mayn't be able to get back to-night. If I can't I'll wire you—yes or no—if yes, then you know how to act.

MRS. SANDERSON. Carrier?

CARL. No, that's wanted for the map I gave you. Besides, it's too late now. It must be the emergency.

MRS. SANDERSON. But at such short notice——!

CARL. No need for you to worry. You'll be well recompensed.

MRS. SANDERSON. Who gets the signal?

CARL. Submarine—U—H—standing out to sea.

(FRITZ *enters*.)

FRITZ. Madam rang for me?

CARL (*at L.C. with brutal vehemence*). Come here, Fritz—closer—closer still. (*He puts his fingers about the wretched man's throat.*) I want you to understand quite clearly that the first lie you utter will be strangled in your throat.

FRITZ. Meester Carl, sare, I no understand. For what should I lie?

CARL. Who has been tampering with the Marconi instrument?

FRITZ. De Marconi! Oh, sare, oh, madam, who done it?

CARL. That's what I'm asking you.

FRITZ. Sare, how can I tell you?

CARL. You lie. (*His grip tightens.*)

FRITZ (*gasping*). I swear I do not know.

CARL. You lie.

MRS. SANDERSON. Carl, my son, be careful!

FRITZ (*at his last gasp*). By our Imperial Master, I swear!

MRS. SANDERSON (*terrified*). Carl! Carl!

(CARL *flings FRITZ from him with violence. FRITZ falls upon the Chesterfield, and remains for some time as he fell, gasping for breath.*)

CARL. Then, who is the spy? It must be some one in this house. Mother, you must track him down.

(FRITZ *staggers to his feet.*)

FRITZ. Meester Brent—he have been in dis room all de morning. He throw a lighted match upon de fire—mit mein own eyes I see him—mit mein own hands I put it out.

(MRS. SANDERSON *drops down R.*)

CARL (*impatiently*). Bah! That eye-glassed fool.

(FRITZ *is about to continue, but CARL silences him with a gesture as BRENT rushes on to the verandah in a great state of excitement, an open newspaper in his hand.*)

BRENT (*top of table, panting*). I say! I say!

(*Everybody swings round to face him.*)

MRS. SANDERSON. You bring good news?

BRENT. No; perfectly awful!

MRS. SANDERSON. A German victory?

BRENT. No; but almost as bad.

CARL. The fleet?

BRENT. No.

MRS. SANDERSON. The news is from Russia then?

BRENT. No—from Newmarket.

CARL. Newmarket?

BRENT (*sinking into chair L. of table*). Yes, they've scratched "Baby Boy" for the Cesarewitch.

TABLEAU.

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

ACT II

SCENE.—*The same as in Act I.*

It is about 4.30 of the same afternoon. As the scene proceeds the light slowly and gradually diminishes until by the end of the act it has become quite dim.

The curtain rises on an empty stage. MRS. SANDERSON enters and is about to ring the bell, when FRAULEIN SCHROEDER, returned from a walk, appears upon the verandah.

She peers through the window to ascertain if the room is occupied, and, having satisfied herself that MRS. SANDERSON is alone, taps upon the panes.

MRS. SANDERSON *opens the windows to admit her.*

MRS. SANDERSON. Back already, Luise? You've been very quick.

FRAULEIN (*moving down to the table, and sitting R. of it*). I have been fortunate. The cliffs were deserted. Everybody was at tea. No one to interrupt. But one half hour, and my drawings were complete.

MRS. SANDERSON (*as she closes windows, and comes down R. of FRAULEIN*). The harbour defences?

FRAULEIN. Every detail.

MRS. SANDERSON. I congratulate you.

FRAULEIN. Dank Dir, mein Kamaredin.

MRS. SANDERSON. Sh! We must still be careful.

(FRAULEIN SCHROEDER *shrugs her shoulders.*)

FRAULEIN. The English have no ears. How, then, should their walls have them? . . . Where is everybody?

MRS. SANDERSON. Need you inquire?

FRAULEIN (*amused and contemptuous*). At their tea?

MRS. SANDERSON. At their tea. Had you brought news that our Admiral had landed upon their shores, they would still ask for a second cup before inquiring the place of his landing! . . . They are a strange people—these enemies of ours!

FRAULEIN (*with fanatical vehemence*). They are fools and the sons of fools! They dwell in a fool's paradise, and bitter shall be their awakening, for it is into our hands that the Lord has delivered them.

MRS. SANDERSON. Thanks be to Him for our part in their undoing.

FRAULEIN. And a great part, mein Kamaredin. . . . (*She rises.*) You have news?

MRS. SANDERSON. From Carl?

(FRAULEIN SCHROEDER *nods*.)

Not yet. I expect a telegram from him every moment.

FRAULEIN. And the spy?—the traitor? Fritz has discovered nothing?

MRS. SANDERSON (*crossing to the door*). I was about to ring for him when you came in.

(*She rings the bell. FRAULEIN moves over to the desk.*)

FRAULEIN. Carl said something about Brent. Surely he doesn't seriously suspect him?

MRS. SANDERSON (*dropping down L. of table*). We must suspect everybody.

(FRAULEIN *returns to R. of table, and seats herself again.*)

FRAULEIN. But Brent!—an idiot and a coward!

—despised even by his own people. The idea is preposterous ! Sooner would I fear that old stupid, Preston.

MRS. SANDERSON (*sitting down L. of table*). I am not so sure. Not every man who wears an eyeglass is short-sighted.

FRAULEIN. But his conversation ! . . . He looks like a fool ; he talks like a fool ; he acts like a fool !

MRS. SANDERSON. All the same, I am not satisfied that he is quite such a fool as he pretends to be.

(FRITZ *enters by the door, and closes it behind him.*)

Ah, Fritz, are they still at tea ?

FRITZ (*at c.*). I haff jussd daken dem off doast de fourth round. (*Passionately.*) Oh, dat it mighd shoke dem in de droat !

MRS. SANDERSON. Sh ! Not so loud ! You have discovered nothing yet ?

(FRITZ *comes down to the top of the table at which FRAULEIN and MRS. SANDERSON are sitting. From sheer force of habit he proceeds to make an orderly arrangement of the newspapers and magazines which are scattered upon it.*)

FRITZ. Nodings . . . nodings for sure.

FRAULEIN (*eagerly*). But you suspect somebody ?

FRITZ. I haff mein eye fix upon one man.

MRS. SANDERSON. Brent, of course.

FRITZ. No ; nod Meester Brent.

MRS. SANDERSON. *Not* Brent !

FRAULEIN. Surely it cannot be the little toy soldier ?

MRS. SANDERSON (*to FRAULEIN*). What do you mean ?

FRAULEIN. " Pennicake "—or whatever his name is.

FRITZ. It iss nod on Brent or Pennicake I fix mein eye, but upon Meester Preston dad I glue him.

FRAULEIN (*to MRS. SANDERSON*). Ah ! What did I say just now ?

MRS. SANDERSON. What makes you suspect Mr. Preston, Fritz ?

FRITZ. He go to do delephone. I liden. I hear him say " Sherman—spy—Marconi."

(MRS. SANDERSON *starts.*)

I hear him dalk about dem. Den he come in here. By himselfes he sit down, all alone. I ask him to go oud. I make excuse de room id musd be sweep ; undt he refuses. He svear at me : " Clear oudt ! " Undt now I follow him always. I leaff him by himselfes alone not effer.

MRS. SANDERSON. You have done quite right, Fritz ; and yet somehow I can't think——

FRAULEIN. But I can. I am not surprised. He has a bad face, cold and cruel like a cod-fish.

MRS. SANDERSON (*to Fritz*). Come and tell me immediately if you find out anything more.

MRS. SANDERSON. At vonce, madam.

(*He turns and moves towards the door.*)

MRS. SANDERSON. And Fritz——

FRITZ (*wheeling*). Madam ?

MRS. SANDERSON. The plan of the mine-field that Mr. Carl gave you ?—has it gone ?

FRITZ. My lasd, my mosd peautiful pird, I haff him ready—de leedle map tied tight to 'is leg. In haff an hour he fly—fasder dan de train—straight for his belovedd Shermamy.

(*He walks to the door.*)

MRS. SANDERSON. And your drawings, Luise ?

FRAULEIN. It is necessary that I take tracings from them.

MRS. SANDERSON. You are not sending the originals ?

FRAULEIN. Ah, no. The originals are for the pleasure of my friends—you understand ? They are works of art. The tracings are but in outline, with my notes of strategic values.

MRS. SANDERSON. Oh, I see. Then——

(She is interrupted by a signal from FRITZ, who snaps his fingers several times in quick succession. This is the signal always employed by him to signify the approach of "the enemy.")

(The voices of PRESTON, MISS MYRTLE and others are heard "off." They draw nearer.)

(FRAULEIN gets up from her chair, and moves down to the desk.)

FRAULEIN. We must arrange about them later. The Philistines are upon us.

(MRS. SANDERSON rises, and, having stationed herself by the fireplace, motions FRITZ to open the door. He does so, and PRESTON enters, followed by MISS MYRTLE, MOLLY, MIRIAM and BRENT.)

(PRESTON comes down to the top of the table. MISS MYRTLE follows him and seats herself R. of it. MOLLY, accompanied by BRENT, moves over to the window, while MIRIAM goes to the bookcase and amuses herself by glancing at the titles of the books upon its shelves.

(When they are all in, FRITZ goes out, closing the door noiselessly behind him.)

PRESTON *(addressing the company in general)*. Well, I must say that I've enjoyed my tea thoroughly. Surprising how hungry the sea-air makes one.

(MOLLY having observed the approach of PENNICUIK, goes out by the window to meet him.)

MISS MYRTLE. You are fortunate, Mr. Preston. The tea that Mrs. Sanderson had provided for us was certainly most excellent——

(The gracious smile which she bestows upon her hostess is returned with interest.)

—and I do not doubt that I should have enjoyed it as much as anybody had it not been for my unfortun-

ate—er—ah, dear Fraulein Schroeder, might I beg another of those excellent pilules for the digestion?

(FRAULEIN turns from the desk, and rises.)

FRAULEIN. With pleasure.

(She opens her bag and takes from it a small bottle, which she hands to MISS MYRTLE. As she is doing this her sketch book slips from her lap unnoticed by her.)

(BRENT sees it fall. He moves down the stage in his most casual manner, and manages—without drawing attention to himself—to push the book along the carpet with his foot until he has got it up to the window-seat. Then he sits down, and bends—to all outward seeming—to adjust his bootlace. He picks the book up and glances through its pages.)

(It is essential that the audience should see BRENT examining its contents, and it must be obvious to them that he considers his find of value. Eventually he slips it into his pocket.)

FRAULEIN. Take two.

(She crosses in front of the table to MRS. SANDERSON who is standing by the fireplace.)

I am sure Mrs. Sanderson will forgive me for remarking that the beef at luncheon was somewhat tough.

MRS. SANDERSON (seating herself in the armchair). I'm so very sorry. I can't understand it. Our butcher is generally so reliable.

(PRESTON, who is sitting at the top of the table, looks up from his newspaper.)

PRESTON. Ah well, well, one must expect these things when the country is in a state of war. That bit of tough beef would have tasted like nectar or elysium—or whatever they call it—to the Germans. Poor beggars! I see in the paper that they've finished their last horse already, and now'll have to

subsist almost entirely on cats and dogs ! One can't help feeling sorry for the poor misguided wretches—but it serves 'em right !

(MRS. SANDERSON rises and crosses behind the table to her desk. As she passes FRAULEIN SCHROEDER she exchanges a glance of amusement with her.)

(MIRIAM has taken a book from the bookcase and sits upon the arm of the Chesterfield, scanning it more or less idly.)

MISS MYRTLE (*vastly indignant*). Cats and dogs ? I never heard anything so wicked ! I shall write to the R.S.P.C.A. to-night. They're sure to have a branch in Germany.

FRAULEIN. Indeed, yes. Fraulein Krupp is President.

(PRESTON snorts. The others find it very difficult to restrain their laughter.)

MISS MYRTLE. I hear that Miss Kidlington was most successful with her white feather crusade this morning.

FRAULEIN. In my country—

(She intercepts a glance of suspicious inquiry from PRESTON, and makes haste to correct herself.)

I should say in my former country—such a thing would not be necessary.

(PRESTON rises from his chair after the manner of one called upon to address the gathering.)

PRESTON. And let me tell you, ma'am, that it is wholly unnecessary in this country. I thoroughly disapprove of such methods. (*He raises his voice.*) If a man cannot or will not hear his country's call, he must either be able to give a reasonable excuse to his friends or be prepared to sacrifice their esteem !

BRENT. Hear ! Hear !

(This ribald interruption deprives PRESTON, for a

moment, of the power of further speech. He glares at BRENT in apoplectic and impotent wrath. MIRIAM perceives that some timely diversion is required to avert a scene. She rises and crosses L.C.)

MIRIAM (*very sweetly*). By the way, Mr. Preston, didn't you get one this morning?

PRESTON. I'm afraid I don't understand. What should I have got?

MIRIAM. A feather.

PRESTON (*hardly able to believe his ears*). Eh? . . . Certainly not! . . . Even Miss Kidlington had sufficient remnants of good taste left to—er—respect my years.

MIRIAM. Yet many a man with a fine, youthful constitution like yours has forgotten the date of his birth-certificate in a spirit of patriotic enthusiasm.

(BRENT *strolls leisurely across the back of the stage to the fireplace. He sits on the fire-stool.*)

(PRESTON, *crushed and unhappy, rises to reply to MIRIAM.*)

PRESTON. My dear Mrs. Lee, there is nobody who—er—would offer himself to his country more—er—readily than I would—*were it possible!* But, believe me, I have responsibilities of a private nature, which—er—even were I all you are pleased to imply—would not permit me to—er—well—er—to risk my life upon the battlefield.

MIRIAM. You are prepared to give me details of those responsibilities?

PRESTON. My dear madam, really—I——!

MIRIAM. You are not. I didn't expect you would be. Don't think me impertinent. I just wanted to bring home to you the fact that there are quite a number of men—(*Her glance rests upon BRENT*)—besides yourself, who have responsibilities which they cannot reveal to the world, but which are more than sufficient to justify them in staying at home.

(She turns on her heel, and moves over to the window-seat up stage.)

(An awkward pause succeeds her final words. Miss MYRTLE and the other ladies exchange significant glances.)

(FRAULEIN drops her ball of wool, and BRENT, pouncing upon it like a kitten, retrieves it and returns it to her.)

BRENT. I say, it's jolly good of you, Fraulein Schroeder, to be knittin' those bed-socks for our wounded fellows.

FRAULEIN. Bed-socks! If you are referring to this, Mr. Brent—*(She lifts her work from her knees)*—it is a muffler which I am making for myself.

BRENT. Oh, I say, I do beg your pardon, but—er—well, anyhow, it's an awfully jolly colour, isn't it.

MISS MYRTLE *(to MRS. SANDERSON)*. We were all most sorry to hear of Mr. Carl's enforced return to town.

MRS. SANDERSON. Yes. Isn't it annoying? However, I'm hoping very much that he may be able to get down again to-night. He's going to wire me.

PRESTON. Nothing serious, I hope—likely to detain him.

MRS. SANDERSON. I have no more idea than you have, Mr. Preston. A servant of the Admiralty is not permitted to reveal the secrets of his country even to his mother.

MISS MYRTLE. How proud you must be of him!

MRS. SANDERSON. I am.

(The door opens and MOLLY enters, pulling PENNICUIK on with her. FRITZ follows them. He holds a salver in his hand upon which is a telegram.)

MOLLY. Come along, Percy.

(FRITZ takes the telegram down to MRS. SANDERSON at desk, and remains beside her whilst she opens it.)

PENNICUIK. Hello, everybody.

(*He comes down L. of PRESTON. BRENT rises from the fire-stool.*)

PRESTON (*to PENNICUIK*). Ah! You're got into fighting kit after all!

PENNICUIK (*distinctly self-conscious*). Yes—don't fit—but it's all right.

MOLLY (*tugging at the tails of his tunic*). It pokes most horribly in the back.

PENNICUIK. I say, Molly, wait a minute. I've got some tremendous news that I simply must tell you all.

CHORUS. { Indeed?
Really?
What is it?

PENNICUIK (*impressively*). A little surprise for the Germans. You know those troops from the North that we've heard so much about—well, it's quite true; a hundred thousand have gone through the country already, and another hundred thousand are going through to-night. That'll be a nasty pill for 'em! That'll tickle the blighters up a bit!

(*FRITZ is much perturbed. He drops the salver.*)

MRS. SANDERSON (*calmly—giving him a glance of warning*). There's no answer, Fritz.

(*FRITZ goes out. MRS. SANDERSON turns to PENNICUIK.*)

You bring us great news, Mr. Pennicuk—if only it is true.

PRESTON. Wonderful news! Did you hear it on good authority?

PENNICUIK. Rather!—the very best. I'm not allowed to tell you who it came from—but it's straight from the nose-bag!

MRS. SANDERSON. It's curious that my son should have said nothing about it. I've just had a wire from him.

(She tears the telegram into fragments, and drops them into the waste-paper basket.)

MISS MYRTLE. Is he coming back to-night?

MRS. SANDERSON. Yes.

MISS MYRTLE. I'm so glad, dear.

MOLLY *(poising herself on an arm of the armchair)*. It wasn't in the papers, Percy.

PENNICUIK. No; and it won't be either. If it's going to be a real surprise-packet for the Germans we've got to lie jolly low about it. They've got their beastly spies all over the place, and—oh, I beg your pardon, Fraulein Schroeder.

FRAULEIN. Please don't. It is not kind for you all to so forget that I am English.

PRESTON. That's right, Fraulein, don't you allow it. "United we stand," eh?

BRENT. Oh, listen to the lion lying down with the lamb!

PRESTON. Bah!

BRENT. Baa! . . . Oh, but I meant you for the lion.

(MOLLY rises, and stands beside PENNICUIK.)

MOLLY. Now you two, please!—Percy hasn't finished.

BRENT. As you were! The battalion will advance! . . .

PENNICUIK. Oh, it's nothing much—only I thought it was rather a joke. I've got to go on board on the cliff-path to-night—just at the bottom of the garden here.

(Exclamations of interest and surprise from the assembled company.)

MOLLY. All by yourself?

(The anxiety with which MRS. SANDERSON and FRAULEIN SCHROEDER await his answer does not escape BRENT.)

PENNICUIK. Oh, I shall be relieved, of course. I get two hours on and four off. I start at six and go on till eight. Then somebody takes the job over, and I don't come on again till twelve.

(FRAULEIN and MRS. SANDERSON *exchange glances.*)

PRESTON. But dear me—surely it's very extraordinary? What on earth is there for you to guard on the cliff path?

PENNICUIK. Goodness alone knows!—I don't. But if you should feel like taking a stroll along the top after six, keep your eyes open, and be ready to answer if I challenge you.

MIRIAM. I shouldn't have the remotest notion what to do if I was challenged. What ought I to do, Mr. Pennicuik?

BRENT (*perching himself upon the fire-stool*). Oh, I can tell you that. He'll pop up from behind a pebble somewhere and say, "Halt! Who goes there?" You answer him as quickly as ever you can, "Friend!" Then he'll say, "Advance one, and give the countersign!" You mumble out the first long word that comes into your head, and he says, "Pass, friend; thumbs up!" (*He turns to* PENNICUIK.) That's right, isn't it?

PENNICUIK (*laughing heartily*). Good Lord, no! All that's a wash-out. South Africa taught us a thing or two better than that. As soon as ever I've said "Halt!" I take cover and get ready to fire!

(*Everybody, stirred and excited, exclaims—*)

OMNES. Fire!

PENNICUIK. And that's all there is to it.

MISS MYRTLE. Dear me, this *does* feel like war! . . . I don't suppose the young couples on the cliff will like it, but how safe *we* shall all feel with Mr. Pennicuik at the bottom of the garden!

MOLLY. Shall we be allowed to come out and have a chat to cheer you up?

PENNICUIK (*crossing in front of the table towards* MRS. SANDERSON). I don't know about that. I believe it's against the rule. But when I'm off duty I'll look in here for a whisky and soda if I may.

MRS. SANDERSON (*rising*). Do, please, Mr. Pennicuk. We shall be delighted. (*She turns to FRAULEIN SCHROEDER.*) Will you come upstairs and help me to finish those body-belts?

(BRENT *looks puzzled.*)

FRAULEIN. With pleasure. (*She rises also.*)

BRENT. Body-belts? . . . Oh, yes, of course, you mean those mufflers for the tummies of the Tommies!

(MRS. SANDERSON and FRAULEIN go out.)

(*The clock in the hall strikes five. PRESTON consults his watch. He rises and moves over to the fireplace.*)

PRESTON. Five o'clock already. I couldn't have believed it.

MISS MYRTLE. No. Time does fly, doesn't it? . . . Oh—and that reminds me; I have an emergency meeting at the Vicarage at a quarter-past. I must go and put on my hat at once. (*She rises and goes towards the door.*) Good-bye for the present, Mr. Pennicuk. I do hope you'll have a pleasant evening on the cliff.

BRENT. I say, d'you mind if I come with you, Miss Myrtle? I want to get some Woodbines for our wounded fellows. As Mr. Preston says, one must do something.

(*He opens the door for MISS MYRTLE, and follows her out of the room.*)

(PENNICUIK stands standing at the door in open-mouthed astonishment at what would appear to be incredible stupidity or callousness on BRENT'S part. He exclaims—)

PENNICUIK. Extraordinary chap—Brent!

PRESTON (*his eyes full of a baleful resentment*).
“Must do something”! . . . I call it brazen!—
brazen!

(MOLLY *makes a gesture of impatience as she sits down
at the head of the table.*)

MOLLY. Father, I do wish you'd let the subject
drop. Kit—er—Mr. Brent has every right to——

PRESTON. No, he hasn't!—not without an adequate excuse!

PENNICUIK. I can't understand it. I should have
thought he could have found something to do.

PRESTON. Of course he could!—something better,
anyhow, than loafing about, potting at inanimate
objects with an airgun! Pah! (*His eye falls
upon MIRIAM.*) Ah, now you're a sensible woman,
Mrs. Lee. What's your opinion?

MIRIAM (*quite sweetly*). I'm really a little tired of
the topic, Mr. Preston, so, if you'll excuse me——

(*She does not finish her sentence, but, picking up a
book, goes out with it, through the window into the
garden.*)

(PENNICUIK *follows her to the window, and closes
it behind her.*)

PRESTON (*grunting as soon as he thinks that she is
safely out of earshot*). Admires him.

PENNICUIK (*dropping down R.*). Mutual?

PRESTON. Indications in that direction.

(MOLLY, *sorely hurt and deeply offended, pushes back
her chair impatiently. She rises and sits upon the
edge of the table, turning her back on PRESTON and
on PENNICUIK—and incidentally upon the audience.
The catch in her voice betrays how deeply she is hurt.*)

MOLLY. Really, I—I think you're both very
horrid this afternoon.

PENNICUIK (*penitent at once*). I'm sorry, Molly.
Let's change the subject.

PRESTON. Nonsense ! There's nothing for you to be sorry about, and we will certainly not change the subject. My daughter must clearly understand, once and for all, that it will be totally and entirely against my wishes and will meet with my utmost displeasure if she continues her intimate regard for Christopher Brent.

(MOLLY rises from the table, and faces PRESTON.)

MOLLY. Father, I think that you're being very, very unjust.

PENNICUIK (*moving towards her R. of table*). But he's making you look so small. People are bound——

MOLLY. Oh, please don't argue with me.

(*She sits down at the head of the table, determined to have the matter out.*)

Mr. Brent has his reasons for doing as he is doing. What those reasons are none of us know. But I'm quite satisfied by his assurances that they are good enough, and that, as soon as ever he can, he will explain them to us.

PRESTON. Fiddlesticks ! If he has reasons, they're something to be ashamed of, or he could explain them now.

PENNICUIK. I'm bound to say that I agree.

(MOLLY sees the futility of further argument. She gets up from her chair. There is hopelessness in her voice, a certain amount of desperation, and more than a little contempt.)

MOLLY. Oh, yes, you're men. You judge everybody by yourselves. You think things. I know them. I love Kit. I've always loved him ; and because I'm a woman—just a woman—I should go on loving him even if you were right and he was in the wrong. I'd love him all the more for being wrong. Can't you understand that ?

(PRESTON and PENNICUIK cannot understand it.)

They exchange glances of comic perplexity, and turn away L. and R. respectively.)

(MOLLY approaches the door, turns, and concludes pathetically and hopelessly—)

No, of course you can't. But I love Kit—and I'm right.

(With the tears very near to flowing she hastens from the room.)

PRESTON *(impatiently, as the door closes behind her)*. Tch! Her mother all over! *(He moves from the fireplace and seats himself L. of the table.)* Oh, these women! You simply can't make them see things in the right light. They don't know what reason means.

PENNICUIK *(moving over to the table and sitting down R. of it)*. Poor Molly! I do wish we hadn't upset her.

PRESTON. Far better that than make no effort to prevent her making a fool of herself. She shan't have anything more to do with Brent, if I can help it.

(PENNICUIK sighs deeply.)

PENNICUIK. Brent's a lucky devil!

(PRESTON starts, and looks at him closely.)

PRESTON *(with sudden decision)*. Look here, my boy, I've often thought that you——

PENNICUIK. Yes, I know, sir; but it's hopeless. I don't stand an earthly.

PRESTON. Have you ever tried? . . . "Faint heart never won fair lady," you know.

PENNICUIK. It's not that. It's just one of those cases in which there can't be any competition. Molly's given all she has to give to Brent. She hasn't so much as a thought to bestow on anybody else.

(PRESTON grunts unamiably.)

PRESTON. Don't be a fool, Pennicuik! The

girl doesn't know her own mind. Girls never do! If there isn't any competition, you must make it. I'll back you up for all I'm worth.

PENNICUIK. Thank you, sir. That's jolly good of you, but—well, I'll think about it.

(He rises, picks up his hat, and moves to the top of the table.)

PRESTON. That's right. You'll find it helps a lot—me being on your side.

PENNICUIK *(doubtfully)*. Yes, I—I'm sure I shall. *(A pause.)* Well, I think I ought to be going now, sir—got to report for duty.

PRESTON. All right, my boy.

(They shake hands.)

Good luck to you.

(PENNICUIK goes out.)

(PRESTON takes up a newspaper, and hunts in his pockets for his eyeglasses. Not finding them upon his person, he makes a tour of the room in search of them. Eventually he discovers them upon the mantelshelf. Having taken them from their case, he drops the case inadvertently into the grate, and stoops down to recover it. At this moment, or rather earlier, the door opens very quietly, and FRITZ peers round it. The sight of PRESTON fishing around the grate confirms his suspicions. He tiptoes into the room and stands just behind PRESTON, so that the latter, in rising, collides with him, and is scared nearly out of his seven senses.)

PRESTON. What the devil——?

FRITZ. Beg pardon, sare.

PRESTON *(gasping)*. I should think you do—giving me a start like that! Idiot! What the blazes d'ye want?

FRITZ. You ring, sare.

PRESTON. I did nothing of the sort.

FRITZ. I meestake.

PRESTON. Oh, go away ! . . . What's the matter with you ? You follow me about as if you were my shadow.

FRITZ. Pardon, sare.

(He makes no move to go, but flits about the room, re-arranging papers upon the tables, and performing a score of other quite superfluous tasks. PRESTON, from over the top of his newspaper, follows his movements with impatient and angry eyes.)

PRESTON *(no longer able to control his indignation)*. Look here, I'm getting tired of you !

(He flings his paper into the grate and approaches FRITZ in menacing fashion.)

Clear out !

FRITZ. Pardon, sare ?

(FRITZ's complete composure causes PRESTON, metaphorically, to foam at the mouth. He advances L. of table.)

PRESTON. Clear out !—if you don't want to be kicked out.

FRITZ *(without trace of emotion)*. Yes, sare.

(FRITZ goes out by the door. PRESTON glares after him. Panting with indignation, he snatches another paper from the table, wheels the armchair about so that it faces the fireplace, and sits down. A moment's pause ensues before FRITZ re-appears upon the verandah, and gently thrusts open the windows. PRESTON fidgets in his chair, shifts his position and turns up his coat collar. Eventually he exclaims—)

PRESTON. Damn the draught !

(He turns round towards the windows and observes FRITZ. He gives vent to one explosive monosyllable, which sounds as much like " bschah ! " as anything, and, springing to his feet, flings his paper violently

into the chair, which he pushes aside. He is almost speechless with rage.)

PRESTON. You!—You!—You!—!!!

FRITZ. Pardon, sare?

(PRESTON has advanced to the table. He bangs his fist upon it.)

PRESTON *(in one violent outpouring of words)*. Pardon be damned! How dare you? You—you you—you!!

(FRITZ turns from his occupation of arranging the window curtains so that they fall in graceful folds, and inquires, encouragingly, in the tone of one much interested—)

FRITZ. Yes, sare?

PRESTON. Don't you laugh at me, you rascal—or you'll laugh on the other side of your face before you're many hours older. Dutch are you? We'll see about that. It's my opinion that you're German! *(He turns down L.)* D'ye hear me?—
GERMAN!

(The chance shot hits home. FRITZ'S jaw drops, and a look of fear comes into his eyes, but PRESTON'S back is turned to him, and the minute acknowledgment escapes him.)

(Meantime BRENT has entered by the door, which he leaves open. He does not see FRITZ, who has flattened himself against the wall between the windows and the door. He advances towards PRESTON, regarding him with amazement.)

BRENT. Hello, hello, hello!—Havin' a nice little quiet chat all to yourself—what?

(Behind BRENT'S back, FRITZ slips out of the room, noiselessly, through the open door.)

(PRESTON, who has wheeled about on BRENT'S first words, observes his escape, and bellows after him—)

PRESTON. Come back, you—you impudent fellow !
Come back here at once.

(BRENT follows the direction of PRESTON'S gaze. He sees nobody and elevates his eyebrows significantly. He addresses PRESTON in a tone of whimsical reproach.)

BRENT. I say, you know, that's the most creditable imitation of the jim-jams I've seen for a very long time.

(PRESTON fixes him with an icy stare. BRENT continues cheerfully.)

Feelin' a bit chippy ?—Eh ?

PRESTON. And what the devil has it got to do with you, sir, if I am ?

BRENT (taking his arm in friendly and confidential fashion). Well, I'm rather a sound man to come to, in a case of this sort. I know one or two jolly good little tips, if you've been overdoin' things a bit.

PRESTON. You are pleased to be impertinent.

BRENT. Oh, I say, don't take it like that !

PRESTON. Sit down !

BRENT. Thanks awfully.

(He sits down at the head of the table. PRESTON draws out a chair L. of it, and sits down also.)

PRESTON. Now, Brent, I want a few straight words with you.

BRENT. Ah, that's good ! So long as you keep 'em straight, we shan't be talkin' at cross-purposes, shall we ?—what ?

PRESTON. We shall not !—if I can help it. . . .
When I first saw you, Brent, I liked you—I liked you very much.

(A pause.)

BRENT. But—— ?

PRESTON (glaring at him). But now, sir, I have

been reluctantly compelled to reverse my opinion—to reverse it entirely.

BRENT. I see. . . . That's unfortunate, isn't it?

PRESTON (*ignoring the comment*). My daughter, I am sorry to say, does not see eye to eye with me in this—as in many other matters.

BRENT. No?

PRESTON. You understand what I am driving at?

BRENT. No, I—I can't say I do.

PRESTON. It's no use mincing matters, Brent—

BRENT. No. You get too much of that sort of thing in a boarding-house, don't you? If they're not mincing things they're making a hash of them—what?

(*He chuckles, well pleased by his quip.* PRESTON turns an irate eye upon him.)

PRESTON. I do not feel in the mood for humour, sir!

BRENT (*blandly*). No?

PRESTON (*with violence*). No! Perhaps we had better come to the point immediately. What I wish to find out from you is whether or not you are prepared to discontinue certain attentions which are no longer welcome to—to myself.

BRENT. That's rather an odd question, isn't it?

PRESTON. Not at all.

BRENT. But, I say, whatever have I done?

PRESTON. It isn't so much what you have done as what you have failed to do. Not to put too fine a point on it, your behaviour has compelled me to the only possible conclusion—and that is that you are a coward. I repeat, sir—a coward!

(BRENT springs to his feet, and turns aside. He flinches almost imperceptibly, but immediately recovers his self-possession. He removes his eyeglass, polishes it, replaces it, and then looks steadily at PRESTON.)

BRENT. Yes. Miss Kidlin'ton settled that point this morning, didn't she? (*He sits down again R. of table.*)

PRESTON. Ah! So you acknowledge it.

BRENT. I never contradict a lady.

PRESTON (*after a brief pause*). I have always maintained that even the worst of us has his good points——

BRENT. That's very considerate of you.

PRESTON (*continuing his sentence*)—and if—if, sir, you have any remnant of manhood left in you; if you are desirous to prove to me that you are not as weak-kneed as you have led me to suppose, you will do the only thing possible in the circumstances.

BRENT. And that is?

PRESTON. Relinquish all claim to the affections of my daughter, and——

BRENT. But I say——

PRESTON. One moment!—and stand aside in favour of a more worthy suitor.

BRENT. A more—*what*?

PRESTON. Mark you, I'm asking nothing unreasonable of you. It is not as though you were engaged to my daughter.

BRENT. No; but——

(PRESTON rises, and taps the table impatiently.)

PRESTON. Come, come, sir—your decision!

BRENT. My dear Mr. Preston, you may rely upon me to do the right thing.

PRESTON (*somewhat nonplussed*). Eh?—Yes—but what d'you call the right thing?

(BRENT rises and drops down R. He speaks as one pursuing his own train of thought, unconscious of interruption.)

BRENT. At the right time.

(*There is a brief pause, during which PRESTON regards BRENT with suspicious and inquiring gaze. FRAU-*

LEIN SCHROEDER enters, and pauses in the doorway, glancing interrogatively from one man to the other.)

FRAULEIN. I beg your pardon. I interrupt, do I not?

PRESTON. Eh? Oh, no, no, certainly not—I was just going.

(He crosses towards the door—handkerchief in hand. As he goes he fumbles about the tails of his coat, intending to push his handkerchief into his tail-pocket. Unnoticed by him, and, for the moment, by BRENT, it falls upon the floor.)

(Upon reaching the door PRESTON turns round again and faces BRENT.)

PRESTON. I can rely upon you, Brent?

BRENT (quite lightly). Absolutely. (He observes the handkerchief which PRESTON has dropped, and steps forward to pick it up.) I say! Hi! You've dropped your handkerchief.

(PRESTON is out of the door and has slammed it behind him before the caution can reach his ears. BRENT is about to follow him, but changes his mind, and thrusts the handkerchief into his pocket. Meanwhilst FRAULEIN SCHROEDER proceeds to hunt about the room, obviously in search of something.)

(Brent turns from the door, and after watching her for a while, inquires—)

BRENT. Lost anything, Fraulein Schroeder?

FRAULEIN (peering under the cushion on the arm-chair). I have mislaid my sketching tablet.

BRENT. Oh, it was yours, then.

(He comes down R. to C. FRAULEIN hastens L. to C. to meet him. There is evidence of anxiety in her voice.)

FRAULEIN. You have found it?

BRENT (drawing the sketch-book from his pocket).

Yes ; it was on the floor here. I've had a peep inside. I—I hope you don't mind.

FRAULEIN (*dissembling her anxiety*). Oh no—why should I ?

BRENT. I say, you know, I'd no idea you were such a toppin' good artist. (*He opens the sketch-book.*) There's a little chap here—ah, that's it. That's the feller—a little picture of the harbour. Y'know that simply tickles me to death.

FRAULEIN (*eyecing him narrowly*). "Tickles you ?"—I do not understand.

BRENT. I mean it's so rippin' good. You've got it absolutely to the life. . . . But I say, what's that tree doin' there ?

FRAULEIN. Tree ? Where ?

BRENT (*indicating the spot with his forefinger*). There. Isn't that where the fort is ?

FRAULEIN. Ah, yes. But the fort is so unbeautiful. I claim an artist's license. I make it instead a tree.

BRENT. I see. Then this flag-pole, here, at the end of the pier—— ?

FRAULEIN. Should be a lighthouse—yes. But it is so stiff, so ugly. I put a flag. It is so much prettier.

BRENT. Aha ! I see you've got the true artist's soul.

(*He closes the sketch-book, and returns it to FRAULEIN.*)

FRAULEIN (*as she takes the book from him*). I fear you do, Mr. Brent, what you call "pull my legs" ! . . . But it is not kind of you to be so critical. It is no more than a rough sketch.

BRENT. No, really, I assure you, I mayn't know much about most things, y'know, but at least I know sufficient about drawin' to recognize the work of a true artist when I see it.

FRAULEIN. You flatter me.

(She turns away up stage L. to the door. BRENT pursues her to the opposite side of the table.)

BRENT. No, I don't. I mean it. I do, really. I wonder, Fraulein, if you'd give me a little sketch some time—just a little memento of a pleasant meetin' and all that sort of thing, don'cherknow.

(She moves nearer to the door.)

BRENT. If you could spare that little bit of the harbour. . . . Y'know it's taken my fancy frightfully.

FRAULEIN. Oh, that is nothing. I will give you one that is more worth the having. . . . You will excuse me? It is necessary that I go.

(MIRIAM comes in, and, seeing FRAULEIN, pauses in the doorway to speak to her.)

MIRIAM. Oh, there you are, Fraulein Schroeder. Mr. Sanderson wants you. She's been looking all over the place for you.

FRAULEIN. Thank you.

(MRS. SANDERSON'S voice is heard calling from another part of the house.)

MRS. SANDERSON *(off)*. Luise!

FRAULEIN *(replying)*. I come . . . I come.

(She goes out, bowing stiffly to MIRIAM as she passes her.)

(MIRIAM watches her out, and, coming down the stage L., rests herself upon the Chesterfield. She turns with whimsical smile to BRENT.)

MIRIAM. Making friends with the Mammon of Unrighteousness?

(BRENT walks over to her and perches himself upon the arm of the couch.)

BRENT. We've discovered that we have a bond in common—a love of art. She's goin' to teach me "Kultur," and, as a start, she's goin' to give me a sketch of the harbour.

MIRIAM. Kit, you *have* got a nerve!

BRENT. So has she. She let me look through her sketch-book without turnin' a hair.

MIRIAM. She knows you've got it, then?

BRENT. Rather! I gave it back to her.

MIRIAM (*amazed*). You gave it back to her?

BRENT. Yes, it's no use to us. She's played the old dodge; stuck in trees instead of forts, and flag-poles instead of lighthouses. It might be anywhere. We can't prove anythin' from that. What we want are the jolly little tracin's she's goin' to make from those "so innocent pictures"—with measurements and notes, and all sorts of interestin' details.

MIRIAM. But how can you be sure of getting them?

BRENT. I can't; but I'm goin' to risk it. I believe in my lucky star, Miriam. It's done me jolly well up to now.

MIRIAM. Well, I think it's too big a risk to take. Those plans might do no end of mischief if once they got to Germany. You're taking an awful responsibility on yourself. You've got more than sufficient evidence to have the whole gang arrested. I can't understand why you don't call the police in, and have done with it.

BRENT (*mysteriously*). Ah! That's where "Uzz" comes in!

MIRIAM (*mystified*). Uzz?

BRENT. Yes; don't you remember: "Uzz awaits signal"—what that chap said on the wireless this morning?—well, I've discovered who "Uzz" is.

MIRIAM. You have?

BRENT. Or rather what it is.

MIRIAM. It?

BRENT. Yes, he's an it!

MIRIAM. Oh, do explain!

(BRENT rises, and sits beside her on the Chesterfield.)

BRENT. Well, it's taken me the dickens of a time to worry it out, and it's the simplest thing in the world. In nearly all codes, as we both ought to have remembered, the same sign stands both for letters and for numbers. For instance, A might be one, B two, C three and so on. Sometimes they work it in a similar way from the opposite end of the alphabet, and in this case I think Z stands for one. Now you understand.

MIRIAM. I don't. U double one?

BRENT. Why not U eleven?

MIRIAM. But that's the name of a submarine.

BRENT. A German submarine.

MIRIAM. And you think that they can signal to a German submarine from here?

BRENT. I do.

MIRIAM. But how?

BRENT (*rising with energy*). That we must find out. Anyhow I thought it worth while to warn the Admiralty.

(*He moves to the small table by the door, and takes from it the parcel he brought in with him.*)

MIRIAM. By telephone?

BRENT (*undoing the wrappings of the parcel*). Yes. There'll be a couple of destroyers in the bay to-night. The submarine ain't likely to come to the surface until the time appointed for the message to be sent. We've got to find out what that time is, and then we do a bit of signalling ourselves. It's going to be a game of diamond cut diamond.

(*He walks over to the desk, and drops the paper and string containing the parcel into the waste-paper basket beside it.*)

MIRIAM (*gravely*). It's going to be a very dangerous game. . . . Did you warn the Admiralty about Carl Anderson?

BRENT. Yes; his number's up all right. A couple

of plain clothes men will come down in the same train with him—unknown to him, of course—and later on, they'll give him the surprise of his young life! Oh I say, we are goin' to have some fun!

(MIRIAM rises and moves C. in front of the table.)

MIRIAM. What do you want me to do?

BRENT (crossing the stage towards her). Well, at the moment, you might give me a hand with this.

(He holds out to her the tin box which he has just taken from its wrappings.)

MIRIAM. What ever have you got there? A box of cigarettes?

BRENT. Looks like it, doesn't it?

MIRIAM. Then it isn't?

BRENT. No, not exactly.

(He opens the lid of the box. It would appear to contain only cigarettes. In point of fact a number of dummy cigarettes have been glued to a stout piece of cardboard, which is secured to the box by hinges, and forms a second and inner lid. Having displayed the cigarettes to MIRIAM, and to the audience, BRENT lifts this lid and discloses a coil of wire to either end of which is attached a disc rather after the style of the receivers employed by telephone operators.)

(MIRIAM peers into the box.)

MIRIAM. It isn't dangerous, is it?

BRENT (laughing). Not to you! As a matter of fact, it's rather a cute little dodge—generally known as "The Eavesdropper's Friend"!

(He gives the box to MIRIAM, and walks up stage R., uncoiling the wires from it as he goes.)

It'll detect sounds entirely indistinguishable by the naked ear, and convey them quite clearly for a mile or more. Oh, it's a useful little feller!

(Whilst he has been talking he has been busily engaged in concealing one end of the apparatus amongst the foliage of a palm near by the window.)

(With MIRIAM'S assistance he slips the remainder of the coil through the space between the window-doors and the floor. Then he goes out by the window for a moment, conceals the receiver on the verandah, and returns.)

There ! " Little boys should be seen and not heard." Well, if necessary, this little boy's going to hear and not be seen ! Comes to the same thing, doesn't it ?

(He closes the windows.)

(MIRIAM laughs and moves C. above the table.)

MIRIAM. Oh, Kit, you're a wonderful person ! Every time I see you you've got some new trick. Where did you find this one ?

BRENT. Sh ! Not a word.

(He tiptoes up to her, lays his hand upon her arm, and whispers in accents of great mystery—)

Didn't you see what was on it ?

MIRIAM. No. What ?

BRENT. Made in Germany !

(MIRIAM laughs again, and BRENT turns from her R.)

By the way, talking about German inventions, what about Fritz's little dicky-birds ?

MIRIAM. I haven't noticed anything yet, but I'll just go and have another look round, shall I ?

BRENT. Yes, do, there's a dear woman. . . . By Jove, Miriam, I am looking forward to to-night.

(MIRIAM goes out by the window.)

(BRENT takes his beloved pipe from his pocket, and hunts upon the mantelshelf for a match, humming merrily to himself the while. The door opens and MOLLY enters. He slips his pipe back into his pocket as he turns to greet her.)

MOLLY (*coming down to the top of the table*). Oh, you are alone.

BRENT. Yes, quite, quite alone, little woman.

MOLLY. I thought I heard somebody talking to you.

BRENT. Yes, it was Miri—er—Mrs. Lee. She's only just this minute gone out.

(*MOLLY is too absorbed in her own thoughts to observe his use of MRS. LEE'S christian name. She crosses to him at L.*)

MOLLY. Kit, father's been talking to me again.

BRENT. Oh, he's been at you, too, has he?

MOLLY. Kit, I've been thinking.

BRENT. That's a tirin' job, isn't it?

(*He pushes the armchair towards her.*)

Come and sit down and tell me all about it.

MOLLY (*coiling herself up in the armchair*). It's no use running our heads against a stone wall, is it?

BRENT (*leaning over the back of the chair*). No, it's not exactly a sound thing to do.

MOLLY (*on the verge of tears*). Well—oh, Kit, how can I say it?

BRENT. Fire ahead, old girl. Don't worry about me.

MOLLY. But I do worry about you. You're the only thing I've got to worry about. And yet I—I can't help seeing things from father's point of view. Of course I know you can explain things. I know you will explain things. But until you do, I—I—oh, Kit, do help me!

BRENT. What is it that you want me to do, dear?

MOLLY. I want you to—to understand.

(*BRENT moves round the back of the chair and seats himself on the R. arm of it. He speaks in all seriousness—*)

BRENT. You want to break off our—our relations, eh?

MOLLY. No, no, I don't. But just for the present just until you can explain, I think it would be better if we—we didn't see quite so much of one another—and—and—oh, Kit, what are we to do?

(She turns away from him, and breaks down entirely. BRENT lays an appealing hand upon her shoulders.)

BRENT. I say, look here, little woman, don't do that! Don't, please, little woman! You want me to understand—well, I—I do understand; and I shan't blame you, my dearest—not one bit—if you say that everything's off, and we're sort of "as you were."

(MOLLY sighs heavily, and turns to him again.)

MOLLY. Oh, Kit, if you only knew how miserable I am!

BRENT. Poor old darling!

MOLLY. Can't you give me even a hint to go on with?

BRENT. I'd give the world to—if only I could. But I can't, Molly.

MOLLY. Not even a very little hint?

(BRENT finds the temptation hard to resist. He rises and moves L.C., turning away from the appeal in MOLLY'S eyes.)

BRENT. Not even a very little one.

(MOLLY rises. She hesitates, her eyes averted from

BRENT. It is with the utmost difficulty that she inquires of him—)

MOLLY. Kit, it—it isn't something you can't tell me—ever?

BRENT. No! It's something I can't tell you now.

(She hesitates more painfully even than before.)

MOLLY. It's—it's not something you're ashamed to tell me?

(BRENT turns to her with a little laugh.)

BRENT. Rather not!

MOLLY (*clinging to him, but hiding her face from him*). Kit, if it was that you really hated the idea, and were even a little bit afraid—

(BRENT *flinches, and she draws him more closely to her.*)

—I'd understand, because I'm only a woman. And though I'd be proud—oh, so proud!—to see you doing things like the rest, in my heart of hearts I couldn't bear the thought of—of losing you—out there.

(BRENT, *deeply moved, presses his lips to hers. His resolution is badly shaken. He feels that he must tell her the truth.*)

BRENT. By Gad, I——

(*He clenches his teeth, and turns away from her again, recovering his determination by a supreme effort of will-power.*)

MOLLY. Tell me, Kit, if you want to, if it's—it's that.

(BRENT *comes back to her.*)

BRENT. It's not that, old woman. It's not anything that either you or I need be ashamed for any one to know.

(MOLLY'S *disappointment at her failure to extract more definite information from him is apparent. She turns on her heel, and walks slowly over to the fireplace.*)

MOLLY. Oh, if you only knew how hateful it is to be kept in the dark.

BRENT. You shan't be—for much longer.

(*All MOLLY'S forebodings are dissipated by this promise. She turns from the fireplace, and runs back to BRENT in high delight. The prospect of a mystery about to be elucidated fills her with excitement.*)

MOLLY. Kit! You're really going to tell me? When?

BRENT. In a day or two. Perhaps sooner. Perhaps even to-night.

(MOLLY flings herself into his arms.)

MOLLY. To-night! . . . Oh, Kit!

(PRESTON'S voice is heard from outside calling "Molly.")

Bother! There's father calling. I must go. I've promised to take him out for a walk.

BRENT. A good long walk.

MOLLY. Why?

BRENT. Well, I think his liver needs jogging up a bit!

MOLLY (laughing). Poor Kit! Was he very horrid to you?

BRENT. I should think he was!

MOLLY (as she kisses him). Bless him. It was a shame!

(Her father calls again.)

Good-bye, dear, I shall have to fly. (She turns in the doorway.) Oh, Kit, if you only knew how much happier you've made me——!

(BRENT walks backwards down stage L., watching her out. He bumps into the armchair and falls over the arm.)

BRENT (sotto voce). Damn!

(He picks himself up and pushes the chair back into its accustomed place.)

(MIRIAM appears upon the verandah, and taps upon the window-panes.)

(BRENT hastens to the windows and opens them.)

MIRIAM (in an excited whisper). Fritz has just taken a pigeon out of the house.

BRENT (taking his airgun from the corner in which it always reposes). Right. (He picks up his hat.)

You say a carrier always circles round three or four times before starting on a journey?

MIRIAM. Always. . . . You've got the dummy message that I made for you?

BRENT. Yes, here it is.

(He takes from his waistcoat pocket a paper rolled cartridge-wise, and wrapped in waterproof silk. This he shows to her, and then slips back into his pocket.)

You'd better stay by the window and try to prevent anybody comin' out into the garden for a minute or two. Engage 'em in conversation—you know.

(He goes out into the garden.)

(MIRIAM establishes herself by the window. All of a sudden MOLLY re-enters by the door, obviously expecting to find BRENT still in the room.)

MOLLY. I say, Kit, father didn't want to—— *(She perceives that MIRIAM is alone in the room.)* Hello, where is he?

MIRIAM. Mr. Brent has just gone out.

(MOLLY moves towards the windows with the intention of following him into the garden.)

MOLLY. Then, if I run after him now I shall probably catch him.

(MIRIAM maintains her position in front of the windows, barring MOLLY'S egress.)

MIRIAM. I don't think you will.

MOLLY. Well, I'll have a try for it, anyhow.

MIRIAM. Miss Preston, there's something I particularly want to ask you.

MOLLY. When I come back, if you don't mind.

(She takes a further step forward, and is amazed and indignant when MIRIAM does not move aside.)

(Frigidly.) Please let me pass.

MIRIAM (*smiling*). Yes, I know that my behaviour must seem very extraordinary, but not even you must disturb Mr. Brent just now.

MOLLY. My dear Mrs. Lee, really, I don't understand this mystery at all. If Mr. Brent had not wished to be disturbed he would surely have mentioned it to me just now.

MIRIAM. Perhaps he didn't think of it.

MOLLY. And in any case I think that you are taking more upon yourself than you have any right to do.

(*She steps aside—very much on her high horse—and stares out of the window.*)

(FRITZ enters the room very quietly by the door.)

MOLLY (*indignantly*). Why, there he is!—just strolling about with his airgun. (*She gives a sudden start and leans forward excitedly.*) Why, whatever is he doing? . . . Oh! He's shot a pigeon!

(FRITZ gives an excited exclamation, and runs forward to the window.)

Oh, Fritz, how you startled me! . . .

(FRITZ waits to hear no more.)

FRITZ. Mein Gott! Ach! Mein Gott!

(*He thrusts MIRIAM aside and dashes through the window.*)

MOLLY (*at c.*). Poor Fritz! He is upset!

(MIRIAM moves R.C.)

MIRIAM (*unable to control her feelings*). Oh, Miss Preston, Miss Preston! Why wouldn't you do as I asked you?

MOLLY. Really, Mrs. Lee, I——

(*Her protest is interrupted by the re-appearance of BRENT upon the verandah. He is clearly very much*

upset and very much annoyed. He does not notice MOLLY, who has dropped down stage L.C.)

BRENT (at R.C.). My dear Miriam, what ever have you been doing? I begged you not to let anybody pass, and now—— (He catches sight of MOLLY, and is taken altogether at a disadvantage.) You, Molly! But I thought you'd gone for a walk with your father!

(MOLLY hastens to the door with trembling lip.)

MOLLY. No. I—I only wish I had done.

(She turns and goes hurriedly from the room.)

BRENT (crossing over to the fireplace). Damnation! Now the fat is in the fire—in every sense of the word!

MIRIAM (joining him). I couldn't help it, Kit. I did my best; but she would insist on coming out to find you—and then——

BRENT. Never mind that, now. We haven't time. You'd better take this for the moment.

(He hands her a small paper rolled cartridge-wise.)

I only just managed to take it from under the bird's leg, and to put the other in its place, before Fritz pounced down upon me like a wild beast.

(Voices, angry and excited, are heard from the garden. They grow more distinct.)

Ah! Now for a scene! You'd better leave 'em to me.

(MIRIAM nods her head in understanding, and goes out by the door.)

(FRITZ and MRS. SANDERSON enter by the window. They are both excited—the former abnormally so. He bears in his hand a dead carrier pigeon. BRENT becomes immediately the “peculiar idiot” of former scenes.)

(FRITZ advances down stage R.)

(MRS. SANDERSON *moves to the top of the table.*)

FRITZ. Now he shall say !

MRS. SANDERSON. You must leave me to speak to Mr. Brent, Fritz.

BRENT (*at L.C.*). I suppose you've come to ask me about that poor little pigeon—what? Y'know I'm most awfully sorry about it—I really am ! It was all Mrs. Lee's fault. She was chippin' me about my shootin'—said if I shot at a pigeon I'd kill a crow, don'cherknow. Well, that put me on my mettle, so I went out and aimed at the first pigeon that I saw—and, by Gad, I hit it !

FRITZ (*fondling the limp body*). Mein pest, mein most peautiful pird !

BRENT. Well, I can't say more than that I'm most frightfully sorry—and, of course, I'll put the matter right—pay for it, and all that sort of thing, y'know.

MRS. SANDERSON. It is impossible to say what the bird was worth. It had won championships all over the country.

BRENT. Well, you put a fancy price on it, Mrs. Sanderson. I won't complain. It's a rule of life, y'know, that one always has to pay through the nose for one's little errors.

(MRS. SANDERSON *turns impatiently up c.*)

(FRITZ *pushes aside the chair R. of the table, which is in his way, and advances upon BRENT threateningly.*)

FRITZ. A leetle error vos it? I am not so sure.

BRENT (*standing over him in high indignation*). What the devil d'you mean?

FRITZ. I think you ondershtand qvite vell vot it iss I mean. You play de fool. You vos not him !

(BRENT *turns indignantly to MRS. SANDERSON.*)

BRENT. Look here, I'm damned if I'm goin' to

have a bally waiter talkin' to me like that. I'm amazed that you allow it, Mrs. Sanderson. You forget yourself, Fritz. You do, indeed. (*He moves up to the door.*) I've said that I'm sorry for the poor little bird—that I'll pay for the poor little bird—and there's an end of the poor little bird, so far as I'm concerned!

(*He stalks, with a fine show of indignation, from the room.*)

(*F RITZ walks after him to the door, and places the dead pigeon on the small table beside it.*)

FRITZ. Oh, it iss ended, mein friend, iss it? Ve shall see!

MRS. SANDERSON (*dropping down L.*). Fritz, you must learn to control yourself. If Brent was dangerous before, you've made him ten times more dangerous now. You've played right into his hand.

FRITZ. It iss not for long he shall be dangerous.

(*He runs the tip of his finger round his throat.*)

MRS. SANDERSON. Don't be ridiculous! . . . You say the paper is still safe.

FRITZ. I show you.

(*He brings the bird down from the table, and holding it by the tip of its wing, discloses the dummy message.*)

He is dere, vere I put him.

MRS. SANDERSON. If Brent had been a spy he would have taken it.

FRITZ (*much disappointed*). Ja! I no dink of dat.

(*He walks slowly back to the small table and replaces the pigeon upon it.*)

MRS. SANDERSON (*her face to the door*). You see, Fritz, how absurd you are. If, Mr. Brent—

(*A movement of the door handle catches her eye, and*

she continues rapidly, almost without a perceptible break—)

—and for to-morrow's breakfast, haddocks, I think, Fritz ; or, no—we had haddocks yesterday, didn't we ?—I think it had better be—er—you wish to see me, Mr. Brent ?

(She turns with a smile to BRENT, who has entered as she was giving her directions, and has walked down to the desk, supposedly in search of his pipe.)

BRENT *(as he crosses to the fireplace)*. No, thanks—sorry to interrupt—but I think I left my pipe on the mantelpiece. . . . No, it isn't there. Now, where the devil—— ? Oh, I remember. I left it on the seat in the garden. I'll just go and get it.

(He goes out by the window.)

FRITZ *(excitedly)*. He vos leesten at de keyhole !
MRS. SANDERSON. Nonsense.

FRITZ *(immensely contemptuous)*. 'Is pipe ! . . .
I vatch 'im.

(MRS. SANDERSON shrugs her shoulders.)

(FRITZ hurries over to the window, steps out on to the verandah, and follows BRENT'S actions with his eyes. A brief pause before FRITZ comes back into the room, obviously crestfallen. He closes the windows behind him.)

MRS. SANDERSON. Well, did he really go for his pipe ?

FRITZ *(despondently)*. Ja ; he get it.

(FRAULEIN SCHROEDER enters, greatly excited. She hastens down stage to MRS. SANDERSON.)

FRAULEIN. I have just heard. Was it the carrier ?

MRS. SANDERSON. Yes.

FRAULEIN. Ai, ai, ai, ai, ai ! . . . And the map ?

MRS. SANDERSON. Safe, thank God !

FRAULEIN. Thank God! . . . You have seen Brent?

MRS. SANDERSON. Yes.

FRAULEIN. What did he say?

MRS. SANDERSON. That it was an accident.

FRITZ (*standing at the top of the table*). A vunny accident!

FRAULEIN. You think he is a spy?

MRS. SANDERSON. No; but Fritz—oh, I don't know what to think! . . . I wish Carl were here.

FRAULEIN. When does he return?

MRS. SANDERSON. He's due in at the station about six—Oh! He'll be simply furious.

FRITZ. He vill dake dat Prent by de droat like he do me, undt shoak de life oudt off him!

(*In the fading light the figure of BRENT is seen for one half second upon the verandah—but for one half second only. Then he crouches down behind the window, and disappears from view.*)

(FRITZ moves down stage L. of the table.)

FRAULEIN. Accident, or no accident, I like not the way that things are going. You have a telegram from Carl. What says he of to-night?

MRS. SANDERSON. The troops are coming through. The emergency signal must be given.

FRAULEIN. At what hour?

MRS. SANDERSON. It must be plainly seen at the first hour of the morning.

FRITZ. De house?—it purns to-nighd?

MRS. SANDERSON. Yes.

FRITZ. Oh, dat ees fine! Seex fat English pigs roast in deir peds!—undt de spy—how he vill crackle! (*He snaps his fingers illustratively.*)

MRS. SANDERSON. No, no, Fritz, don't! (*She shudders and turns aside to the fireplace.*) Oh, it's too horrible! Is there no other signal we can give?

FRAULEIN. None. It is necessary for our safety and for the success of our plans that nobody but

those to whom we send it shall ever guess the signal is a signal. It must be natural—and what more natural than that a house catch fire? It happens every day in every place, it is simple, it is sure, and it is safe.

MRS. SANDERSON. But, surely, there is some warning we can give the others?

FRAULEIN. After what has happened?—It would be madness! Why should you mind? They are your enemies. And—think!—if this signal should miscarry it is the sons of the Fatherland will suffer.

MRS. SANDERSON. Yes, you're quite right. The cause demands it. (*She pulls herself together and turns to FRITZ.*) Where is the petrol stored?

FRITZ. In de small, empty room.

MRS. SANDERSON (*to FRITZ*). Mr. Carl will give you his orders. Do nothing until you have heard from him. (*She turns to FRAULEIN SCHROEDER.*) You have packed, Luise?

FRAULEIN. Everything. After twenty long years of exile I return to my own land. (*She draws her handkerchief from her belt, and dabs at her eyes.*) It is too good—too good!

MRS. SANDERSON. What about your drawings?

FRAULEIN. They are here. (*She takes them from her bag, and gives them to FRITZ.*) I have addressed them. They are all ready. You will post them.

(FRITZ takes the letter, slips it into his pocket, and moves up to the door.)

MRS. SANDERSON. You are sending them to London?

FRAULEIN. To our good friend, Mr. Smith. From him they go to Holland, and from Holland to Berlin. It is so simple. (*She presses her hand to her forehead.*) I think I go now to rest until the dinner hour. (*She turns towards the door.*)

FRITZ. Ah, but we forget—de guard upon de

cliff—Meester Pennicake—he see de fire—he make alarm.

FRAULEIN. He must not see the fire, Fritz.

FRITZ. Undt who will stop him?

FRAULEIN. You will.

FRITZ. Ach, goodt, I onderstandt. . . . Undt, afterwards, we meet in London, hein?

FRAULEIN. In London. Your passport will be ready.

FRITZ. Undt der monies?

FRAULEIN. And the money.

(MRS. SANDERSON moves to the door with FRAULEIN SCHROEDER.)

MRS. SANDERSON. Tidy up the room before you go, Fritz. . . . And you'd better open the window; the room's very stuffy.

(MRS. SANDERSON and FRAULEIN SCHROEDER go out.)

(FRITZ goes to the windows, unlatches them, and throws them open. The chairs at the head of and R. of the table have been pushed away from it. He puts them in position again. Having done so he crosses to the fireplace, and picks out of the grate the two crumpled newspapers that PRESTON flung into it. In taking these back to the table, he drops one R. of it; having smoothed the creases from the one which he has retained, he drops on one knee in order to retrieve the other. This gives BRENT his opportunity. He tiptoes into the room from the verandah, folding into a bandage as he advances, the silk handkerchief which PRESTON dropped and which he pocketed earlier in the act. He pounces upon FRITZ, plants a knee in the small of his back, and ties the handkerchief tightly about his eyes. Holding him in a firm grip he pinions his arms by pulling his coat from the shoulders half way down his back. Then, having extracted from his waistcoat pocket the envelope containing the plans, he spins about him as one does

the "blind man" in a game of "Blind Man's Buff," and escapes with all speed by the window. As FRITZ tears the bandage from his eyes, CARL enters by the door. He wears a dustcoat and carries a small suit-case. It has become dusk, and Fritz—still giddy, and failing to recognize his master in the half-light—takes him for his assailant, and flings himself viciously upon him. CARL thrusts him back with an exclamation of anger and amazement, and switches on the light. Perceiving whom he has attacked, FRITZ is overwhelmed by apprehension.)

FRITZ (at R.C.). Mr. Carl! Oh, sir, forgive me——

CARL. What the devil's the matter with you?

FRITZ. A moment ago ve vos alone here—Fraulein Schroeder, Mrs. Sanderson, undt me. Fraulein Schroeder she giff to me a letter mit plans to posd. She go out. I am left by meinselves. I tidy de room. Suddenly—from nowhere—someones spring upon me. He break mein back in twice. He tie dis handkerchief about mein eyes. Von second only undt I tear it off. But it iss too late. He iss gone——

(A sudden misgiving causes him to interrupt himself.
He feels in his waistcoat-pocket.)

—Mein Gott! It is gone too!

CARL. What's gone?

FRITZ. De letter dat Fraulein Schroeder give to me to posd—de plans!

(CARL advances upon FRITZ menacingly, as though about to strike him.)

(FRITZ cringes. CARL regards him with contempt, then turns abruptly on his heel, and strides over to the fireplace.)

CARL. Good God, what a damned fool you are! First the Marconi—now the plans! Who is it—who the devil is it?

FRITZ. It is Prent.

CARL (with angry impatience). Pshaw!

FRITZ. It must be Prent.

CARL. Why?

FRITZ. He shoot de pigeon. (*He takes the dead bird from the table and displays it.*) Mit mein own eyes I seen him.

CARL (*advancing L.C. towards him*). What?

FRITZ (*stroking the bird's feathers*). De last Potsdam carrier—mein most peautiful pird!

CARL (*in intense anxiety*). Then that map I gave you?

FRITZ. Ah no! I haff him here.

(*He taps his pocket.*)

(*CARL turns from him impatiently and paces across stage C. down R. and in front of the table to L.*)

CARL. What's the use of that? The delay!—the delay!—It's fatal! Oh, God! Why did I ever go away? The work of months ruined—ruined!—and all by a fatuous fool with an eyeglass?—I don't believe it. Let me have a look at that handkerchief.

(*He advances L.C.*)

(*FRITZ unties the knot, and holds the handkerchief out to him. CARL takes it into his hand, and scrutinizes it very carefully.*)

Silk, eh? Well, anybody might use a silk handkerchief. (*He examines the four corners for some distinguishing mark.*) There's no name on it. (*He lifts it to his nostrils.*) Pah! Scent and tobacco! Horrible!

FRITZ (*excitedly*). Meester Prent he use it. I see a pottle on his dressing-table.

(*CARL looks up sharply at the sound of somebody whistling cheerfully outside the window. BRENT appears on the verandah.*)

CARL (*significantly*). H'm! Well, we'll soon find out.

(He thrusts the handkerchief into his pocket, and signs to FRITZ to go. In the most leisurely manner possible BRENT strolls into the room.)

BRENT *(very cheerfully)*. Ah, so you're back again, Sanderson. Jolly pleased to see you. We haven't had our little chat about the war yet.

(CARL takes off his overcoat, and tosses it into the armchair. His manner is entirely friendly.)

CARL. Oh, don't let's talk shop just now. I'm dead sick of it. Had an awful tiring day.

BRENT *(seating himself)*. Right'o!

(CARL takes a cigar-case from his pocket, and moving over to the table, holds it out to BRENT.)

CARL. Have a cigar?

BRENT. No, thanks—never smoke 'em.

(CARL draws out a chair L. of the table, and sits down.)

CARL. Are you a cigarette-fiend?

BRENT. No, I'm a piper. *(He takes his pipe from his pocket and handles it lovingly.)* Here's my best pal in the world. We're absolutely inseparable.

(The two sit down opposite to one another, and light up.)

CARL. What sort o' tobacco d'you smoke?

BRENT. A special mixture that a little tobacconist makes up for me.

CARL. Scented, isn't it?

BRENT *(holding the bowl of his pipe close to his nose)*. No, I don't think so.

(Quite unostentatiously CARL takes from his pocket the handkerchief with which FRITZ was blindfolded.)

CARL. Most people jeer at scented tobacco, but I rather like it myself. Depends on the scent, of course. There's nothing delights me more than a really good perfume. Effeminate habit, I suppose—but I always use it on my handkerchief.

BRENT (*expressing as much polite interest as can be conveyed in a monosyllable*). Ah!

CARL. Do you?

BRENT. Occasionally.

(*The door opens and PRESTON enters.*)

PRESTON (*in the doorway*). Ah! So you've managed to get back, Sanderson. That's splendid. Telling Brent the latest news from Town, eh?

(*He scats himself at the head of the table.*)

CARL. No, as a matter of fact, we were discussing perfumes.

PRESTON. Perfumes! . . . That's a curious topic, isn't it?

CARL (*sniffing at the handkerchief*). Almost as curious as this.

(*He unfolds the handkerchief and holds it out towards BRENT, observing him closely the while.*)

Is this yours, Brent?

(BRENT *shakes his head. He appears uninterested and unconcerned.*)

BRENT. No.

(PRESTON, *having adjusted his glasses, recognizes the handkerchief as his. He rises from his chair, and grabs at it.*)

PRESTON. No—damme!—it's mine.

(*He blows his nose upon it, and sits down again.*)

(CARL *thrusts back his chair, springs to his feet, and turns upon PRESTON a look of absolute stupefaction. His back is turned to the audience and to BRENT, who is shaken with silent laughter as he re-lights his pipe.*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

ACT III

SCENE I

SCENE.—*The same as in the previous acts.*

It is after dinner. The windows are closed and the curtains drawn.

BRENT and MIRIAM are alone in the room. They both look very grave and talk in quick decisive tones.

MIRIAM sits in the armchair beside the fireplace. BRENT stands near by coiling up his detectophone so as to enable him to fit it into its box.

MIRIAM. And do you mean to tell me that you actually heard them planning to do that?

BRENT. Yes—thanks to my patent eavesdropper.

MIRIAM. But it's fiendish—devilish!

BRENT. These people stick at nothing.

MIRIAM. I know. But this is sheer, cold-blooded murder.

(BRENT places the detectophone on the small table by the door.)

BRENT. It's war.

(MIRIAM shudders in horror.)

MIRIAM. Oh! (A pause.) Kit, surely you'll have them arrested now?

(BRENT comes down stage L. to the table.)

BRENT. When the time comes.

MIRIAM. Now !

BRENT. My dear girl, we're after bigger fish than the Sandersons. If we were to net the smaller fry now, the real prize might very easily slip through our fingers.

MIRIAM. How ?

BRENT. They'd contrive to send some warning to their friends. You can bet your boots that they've left nothing to chance.

MIRIAM. No, it's you who're taking chances.

BRENT (*seating himself L. of table*). Well ?

MIRIAM. Chances you're not justified in taking. Supposing anything goes wrong ?

BRENT. It's not going wrong.

MIRIAM. But supposing it does. What's going to happen to the others ? What's going to happen to—Miss Preston ?

BRENT. Look here, Miriam, there's nothing on earth to worry about. Everything's in our favour. We're forewarned and forearmed, and if we can't avert a catastrophe now, well—we're a precious couple of muddlers, that's all.

MIRIAM. But surely we ought to give them some warning ?

BRENT. And keep the Sandersons in blissful ignorance ? My dear girl, it can't be done.

(MIRIAM rises. *She stands with one foot on the footstool, raising her arm upon the mantelshelf.*)

Think of old Preston, think of Miss Myrtle—if we told them. Why, we should have a perfect panic in the place !

MIRIAM. I'm thinking more of Miss Preston.

(BRENT rises, and crosses over to her.)

BRENT. Do you think that I'm not thinking of her, too ? (*He pauses and then lays his hand on MIRIAM'S shoulder.*) Look here, Miriam, whenever we've worked together before, you've always trusted

in me implicitly not to make any blunders. Won't you go on trusting in me?

(MIRIAM turns a troubled face to him.)

MIRIAM. Yes, of course I will, Kit, only——

BRENT. There mustn't be an "only."

(His tone gives confidence to MIRIAM. She smiles gravely, and places her right hand over his.)

MIRIAM. All right, there shan't be. . . . What do you want me to do?

BRENT. I want you to go up to bed in the ordinary way, just as if nothing had happened. I'll do the rest, and—

(As the door opens suddenly to admit CARL, who comes down R.)

—would you believe it, he actually went three no trumps!

MIRIAM (banteringly). How disgraceful!

BRENT (who has once more adopted his rôle of "The peculiar idiot"). It was! He hadn't got a spade in his hand!

CARL. Are you going to have a rubber to-night?

BRENT (turning to him). No, not to-night. Mrs. Lee has challenged me to a game of snooker. We've got a pair of gloves on it.

CARL. Ah—an exciting match. You'll find the table at liberty now. I've just finished a game with Mr. Preston.

BRENT. Good! (To MIRIAM.) Then we'll go at once, shall we?

MIRIAM. Yes, let's!

BRENT takes MIRIAM by the arm, and leads her up L. to the door. He holds the door open for her. She goes out. He pauses to pick up the box containing his detectophone and follows her.)

(CARL, who is smoking a cigar, strolls across stage L. and watches them out. Until the door is closed upon

them he appears quite cheerful, but the moment that he is left alone, he drops his mask, and shows himself worried and perplexed. He pauses irresolutely for a moment, before going down to the desk R. He seats himself before it, and opening a little drawer, takes from it some papers. Almost in the same moment he hears the sound of approaching footsteps, and makes haste to thrust the papers back into the drawer. He has barely time to close the drawer before MRS. SANDERSON and FRAULEIN SCHROEDER enter by the door.)

MRS. SANDERSON (*indicating that they are unaccompanied by any of her guests*). All right, Carl. (*She comes down L.C.*) Well?

CARL (*moodily*). Well?

MRS. SANDERSON. You have found out nothing more?

(*She seats herself L. of the table.*)

CARL. No. The Preston idea is ridiculous. It must be Brent—and yet——

FRAULEIN (*who has come down R. of the table*). What about Mrs. Lee?

MRS. SANDERSON (*amazed*). Mrs. Lee?

[FRAULEIN] (*CARL twists around in his chair, then rises.*)

CARL, By Gad, I never thought of her.

(*FRAULEIN draws out a chair R. of table, and sits down.*)

FRAULEIN. We know nothing of her. A telegram—no more—and she arrive. She comes from goodness knows where, she do goodness knows what—it is not such a bad idea—hein?

(*CARL draws his chair nearer to the table. He sits astride of it, resting his arms upon the back.*)

CARL. Not at all. And she and Brent are as thick as thieves. Why shouldn't they be working together?

FRAULEIN (*wisely*). No, no, he like her. She make use of him. For the rest—he has not the brains.

MRS. SANDERSON. I don't feel certain. Oh, if only we could make sure.

FRAULEIN (*confidently*). It is very simple.

CARL (*sceptically*). Indeed! Then perhaps you'll tell us.

FRAULEIN. With pleasure . . . I am growing old, but I am as yet no fool. (*She lays the index finger of her right hand along her nose.*) . . . There is Miss Preston.

MRS. SANDERSON. Miss Preston?

FRAULEIN. Is she not in love with Brent?

CARL. Well, what about it?

FRAULEIN. Suppose we tell her that we have reason to believe that Brent is a spy in the pay of Germany.

CARL. T'chah! She'll laugh at us.

MRS. SANDERSON. Wait a minute, Carl. He has not explained yet why he cannot enlist. Miss Preston will think of that. There must be a reason.

FRAULEIN. Exactly. She will confront him, and if he does not satisfy her——

CARL (*impatiently*). My dear Fraulein——

FRAULEIN. Wait. We tell Mr. Preston first, and suggest he warn his daughter. You want Brent out of the way to-night, do you not? Well, Preston is a magistrate. He does not love Brent. Unless Brent is very clever, he have him arrested at once, upon suspicion.

CARL (*grudgingly*). Yes, there's something in that.

MRS. SANDERSON. But what ground for our suspicions can we give to Preston?

FRAULEIN. The truth.

MRS. SANDERSON (*flabbergasted*). The truth?

FRAULEIN. As I say. . . . Is not Carl a servant of the English Admiralty? Does he not lose here valuable papers?

(CARL chuckles and draws his chair nearer to the table.)

CARL. By Jove, Fraulein, now that's really clever!

(FRAULEIN'S rejoinder is prevented by FRITZ who bursts into the room in an intense state of excitement.)

(He hastens down stage R. to CARL.)

FRITZ. Meester Carl, sare! Madam! De map! It ees not dat I tie to de pigeon's leg! Shust now I examine him mit mein udder papers, undt I findt—dis!

(CARL springs to his feet, and thrusts back his chair.)

CARL. Damnation! Let's have a look at it.

(FRITZ gives it to him.)

No, by Gad—it's a substitute blank—and a damned clever one—waterproof silk and all! That proves it.

(He hands it back to FRITZ, who takes it over to the table, and displays it to MRS. SANDERSON and FRAULEIN.)

MRS. SANDERSON. It is Brent, then!

CARL. It must be.

FRAULEIN. Why not make certain?

CARL. We will.

(He brings from the desk an ash-tray and bowl of matches, and places them upon the table. To FRITZ—)

Take my compliments to Mr. Preston, and tell him I shall be glad if he will come in here, and—er—smoke a cigar with me.

FRITZ. Very good, sare.

CARL. See that we are not disturbed.

FRITZ. Yes, sare.

(MISS MYRTLE enters as FRITZ is about to go out.)

(He holds the door open for her, and then exits, closing it behind him.)

MISS MYRTLE. I've just come in to say good-night.
(She advances down stage L.C. MRS. SANDERSON rises and crosses to L.)

MRS. SANDERSON. You're going to bed unusually early.

(MISS MYRTLE moves down stage L. towards her.)

MISS MYRTLE. I need the rest. I'm rather a light sleeper, as you know. And last night Mr. Brent awakened me when he came upstairs. I'm sure he'd be most upset if he knew of it, so I haven't said a word, but I didn't get to sleep again for several hours.

(FRAULEIN rises from the table.)

FRAULEIN. Shall I give you a little remedy I have? It will ensure sound repose.

(MISS MYRTLE leaves MRS. SANDERSON and crosses to FRAULEIN at R. of the table.)

MISS MYRTLE. Ah, thank you. It would indeed be good of you.

(She moves down to CARL at R. and shakes hands with him.)

Good-night, Mr. Sanderson.

(FRAULEIN crosses to MRS. SANDERSON, whispers a few hasty words to her, and then moves to the door.)

CARL. Good-night. I hope you will sleep better.

MISS MYRTLE. Thank you, I hope so.

(She crosses below the table to MRS. SANDERSON with outstretched hand.)

Good-night, dear Mrs. Sanderson.

(MRS. SANDERSON takes her hand, and moves two steps up stage L. with her. Her uneasiness is evident.)

MRS. SANDERSON. Do you think it quite wise to take a sleeping-draught?

(FRAULEIN turns sharply with a frown of annoyance.)

FRAULEIN. Oh, this is nothing. It will but produce healthy and natural sleep.

MISS MYRTLE. So very comforting.

(She goes to the door, turns on the threshold, smiles and nods to everybody separately, murmurs a final "good-night," and goes out, followed by FRAULEIN.)

(There is a moment's silence. CARL and his mother looks at one another.)

CARL (callously as he crosses to C., and sits on the table). She won't be much loss.

MRS. SANDERSON (in protest, as she crosses to him). Oh, Carl, it's horrible! If only nobody had interfered! . . . I don't like—murder, Carl.

CARL. Sh!

(He rises and puts an arm about her shoulders. They walk slowly down stage L.)

It is not for us to judge, mother. We must obey.

(PRESTON enters. MRS. SANDERSON smiles on him mechanically, while CARL goes forward to greet him.)

PRESTON (at C.). Fritz tells me you have been kind enough to invite me to have a cigar with you.

CARL (advancing towards him). Yes, we desire the pleasure of your company, and the benefit of your wise counsel.

(He holds out his cigar case.)

PRESTON. Very nice of you.

(He accepts a cigar, takes a match from the bowl upon the table, lights his cigar, and walks down R. of the table.)

MRS. SANDERSON. Do sit down, Mr. Preston.

PRESTON. Thank you.

(*He seats himself R. of the table. CARL sits at the top and MRS. SANDERSON L. of table. After puffing luxuriously at his cigar for a moment—*)

Well, now, what can I do for you?

MRS. SANDERSON. We're in somewhat of an awkward predicament, Mr. Preston.

PRESTON. Indeed! I'm very sorry to hear that.

CARL. When I came down from London last night, I brought with me certain important documents—Government secrets. They have disappeared.

PRESTON. Disa——! 'Pon my word, you don't say so.

CARL. It's true, unfortunately.

PRESTON. And you think they've been—er——

CARL. Stolen!

PRESTON. Dear, dear, dear! You have your suspicions?

MRS. SANDERSON. We have a very grave suspicion that one of our number is a spy.

PRESTON. A German spy?

MRS. SANDERSON. Yes.

PRESTON. Somebody in this house?

MRS. SANDERSON. One of my guests.

PRESTON. Oh no, no, no, surely not. Surely you're mistaken.

MRS. SANDERSON. I'm afraid not.

PRESTON. But—er—there are only—let's see—five of us. (*He ticks them off upon his fingers.*) My daughter—Miss Myrtle—Brent—Mrs. Lee—and—er—good gracious! You don't mean to say you've got the damned impertinence to suggest that I——

(*He puts his cigar down upon the ash-tray, and springs to his feet in a fine fury of indignation. CARL rises, also, with deprecating hand.*)

CARL. My dear sir——

PRESTON (*violently*). Don't you "dear sir" me,

sir! . . . Ah, that accounts for it! That explains why your confounded waiter——! How dare you? How dare you get me in here, and—and—and——?

MRS. SANDERSON. My dear Mr. Preston, it's not you that we suspect.

PRESTON. Oh—oh—it's not me, eh? Well, I'm glad to hear it. Then who the devil is it?

(He sits down again. CARL follows his example.)

CARL. We suspect Mr. Brent——

PRESTON. Brent! Brent! But he hasn't the brains!

CARL. And possibly, also, Mrs. Lee.

PRESTON. Mrs. Lee, too! Dear, dear, this is very disturbing.

MRS. SANDERSON. The matter, you see, is as delicate as it is important. We don't want to make a mistake, and——

PRESTON. Precisely, precisely. *(He assumes a very knowing manner.)* Brent, eh? Brent! This would explain his inability to give us a reason for not enlisting.

MRS. SANDERSON. Entirely.

PRESTON. Only this very day I warned my daughter——

CARL. Your daughter—ah, yes. Don't you think that she might be induced to help us?

PRESTON *(astonished)*. Molly?

CARL. From what my mother has told me, I have gathered that she has more influence with him than anybody else.

PRESTON. Perhaps—perhaps. But—er—I don't want to make a fool of myself. . . . How do you know that Brent's got the papers?

CARL. We don't. We only suspect. Your daughter could make certain.

PRESTON. M'yes. But I doubt if she'll consent. Besides——

MRS. SANDERSON. We mustn't forget that Mrs. Lee is involved in this suspicion, too.

PRESTON. What are her relations with Brent?

MRS. SANDERSON. From what I have seen, I should say—well—er——

(Her gesture is more eloquent than any words.)

PRESTON. Ah! If only one could prove that, it would certainly cure Molly of her undesirable attachment.

MRS. SANDERSON. If I may speak for my sex I should say that even a hint of it would be sufficient to make her determined to find out the truth.

PRESTON. Set a woman to catch a woman, eh? —Particularly when there's a man in the case!

(He chuckles, well pleased by his quip. MRS. SANDERSON and CARL feel compelled to smile politely.)

CARL. Now you will understand, Mr. Preston, why we have come to you to help us. We feel that you are the man to handle the situation authoritatively and delicately.

PRESTON *(smacking his lips)*. Delicately—ah!

CARL. And until you can assure us that we have good reason to act for ourselves, we——

PRESTON *(as he rises, and moves down stage R.)* You leave it to me—entirely to me.

(A glance of triumph passes between CARL and his mother. MRS. SANDERSON rises and moves up stage L. to the door. PRESTON continues.)

It will afford me the utmost satisfaction to draw a very secure net round this—this viper in sheep's clothing.

(He turns and observes that MRS. SANDERSON is about to leave the room.)

If you are going out, Mrs. Sanderson, you might ask my daughter to come to me, here.

MRS. SANDERSON. With pleasure.

(She goes out by the door.)

PRESTON. By George, if there's anything in this, Brent shall be laid safely by the heels to-night.

(CARL rises, pushes his chair back under the table, and going up to the window, draws back the curtains. He answers PRESTON with a smile—)

CARL. You mustn't forget that he's innocent until you've proved him guilty.

PRESTON *(moving over to the fireplace)*. Quite so, quite so—but even if it only looks suspicious, we'll lock him up—we'll lock him up at once.

(CARL smiles again, well satisfied. He throws open the windows.)

(It is high tide, and the waves are heard breaking upon the beach. The night is perfect and the light of a full moon is reflected in a silver pathway on the sea.)

PRESTON. You must look out for the guard, you know.

(CARL displays a white pocket-handkerchief.)

CARL. I've got my white flag ready in case of emergency—perhaps we'll meet later.

PRESTON *(moving towards the windows)*. We must.

CARL. When it's just possible that you may have——*(He pauses and laughs significantly)*—information useful to the enemy.

(He goes out, and PRESTON, having closed the windows, strides up and down the room, puffing furiously at his cigar. MOLLY enters by the door.)

PRESTON. Ah! There you are!

MOLLY. Mrs. Sanderson told me that you've something important to say to me.

(PRESTON takes her by the arm, and leads her down stage L. to the armchair.)

PRESTON. I have—very—of international importance—grave—very grave importance. Sit down.

(MOLLY obeys. PRESTON becomes darkly mysterious.)

MOLLY (*with mock concern*). It all sounds very thrilling. What is it?

PRESTON (*L.C. above her*). It concerns your—your late admirer, Christopher Brent.

MOLLY (*wearily*). Oh, father! Surely you're not going to start on that again. I'm so tired.

PRESTON (*bending over her chair—impressively*). Had you any idea that you have been consorting with a spy?

MOLLY. A spy! Whatever do you mean?

PRESTON. Just what I say. I have my reasons for believing that Brent is a spy in the pay of—well—a country we need hardly name.

(*He moves away from her and seats himself L. of the table.*)

MOLLY (*laughing spontaneously*). Oh, father! What on earth have you got hold of now?

PRESTON. This is no laughing matter, my child.

(*A sudden fear catches at MOLLY's heart. She becomes very grave. She rises and moves over to her father.*)

MOLLY. Father, you're—you're not serious, are you?

PRESTON. I was never more serious in my life. Certain important documents which had been entrusted to the care of young Carl Sanderson have disappeared—plans I believe.

MOLLY. But that isn't to say that Kit——

PRESTON. I know it isn't. I don't say that he has stolen them. I sincerely hope he hasn't. What I do say is that the finger of suspicion points in his direction, and in the direction of Mrs. Lee.

MOLLY. Mrs. Lee! (*Excitedly*.) Yes, I shouldn't be a bit surprised.

PRESTON. You wouldn't, eh?

MOLLY. But I don't believe it of Kit. Nothing 'll make me believe it!

(She turns away. PRESTON rises, and leads her down stage L.)

PRESTON. Why are they so intimate, then?

MOLLY. Oh, well——

PRESTON. They're supposed to have met yesterday for the first time, aren't they?

MOLLY *(reluctantly)*. Yes.

PRESTON. Do you believe that?

(There comes a pause. MOLLY is silent. She turns from her father, unhappily, and hangs her head.)

You don't. You know you don't. You can't. It's against all common sense and reason. . . . If their acquaintance is quite innocent, why shouldn't they be open about it? Why shouldn't they speak the truth?

(Another pause. Still MOLLY makes no answer.)

Then there's another thing. Why doesn't Brent enlist? He says he can't. Very well, then, let him give us his reasons. He declines to do so. Doesn't it strike you—being my daughter and therefore no fool—that this supposition provides a reason—an indisputable reason?

(He crosses R. and awaits MOLLY's answer. None is forthcoming. He becomes impatient, and taps his fingers upon the table.)

Well? Haven't you anything to say?

(MOLLY turns and walks slowly below the table to her father. She is lost in thought, and speaks more to herself than to him.)

MOLLY. Miriam Lee a spy!

(Her reflections culminate in a glad conclusion.)

Then, father, if this is so, perhaps Kit doesn't care for her, and——

PRESTON (*utterly at sea*). What on earth d'you mean ?

(MOLLY turns back again to L., still deep in reflection.)

MOLLY. If Kit's a spy, and Miriam Lee is also a spy, then that would account for—— (*Her mind is made up. She turns to her father with determination.*) Father, I don't believe Kit is a spy ! I believe that woman's used him. She's the spy.

PRESTON (*moving down stage R. in front of the table*). Suspicion points primarily to Brent.

(MOLLY ignores his challenge. She runs to the door.)

MOLLY. Father, I've an idea ; I've suddenly thought of something.

(PRESTON turns to face her.)

PRESTON (*irritably*). You're—you're very jumpy ! What is it ?

MOLLY. I'll be back in a minute !

PRESTON. But, Molly—— !

(*His protest is of no avail. MOLLY darts out of the room and flies past BRENT, who is standing on the threshold, billiard-cue in hand. He steps back hastily, in order to avoid a collision, and stares after her retreating figure.*)

BRENT (*whimsically to PRESTON*). I say, did I imagine it ?—or did something go past me ?

PRESTON (*stiffly*). My daughter—er——

BRENT. Oh !—imitation woman catchin' train !—very difficult ! I've seen her do it before.

(*He comes into the room, and moves down to the mantelpiece.*)

Hope I'm not disturbing you, but I've left my pipe in here again.

(He takes it from the mantelshelf, and pockets it.)

I couldn't make out why I was playin' so badly. But that's it—my nerves—they want soothin'.

(He turns to go. PRESTON gets between him and the door.)

PRESTON. Don't run away. I want to speak to you.

BRENT. Awfully sorry, sir, but——

PRESTON. I shan't keep you a minute.

BRENT. Oh, all right.

(He returns reluctantly.)

PRESTON. Been having a little flutter at snooker, eh?

(BRENT leans over the table, taking a few practise shots with his cue. The match-bowl serves him for ball.)

BRENT. No, my flutterin' days are over. It's quite a long time since I hopped out o' the nest. But I've just lost a pair of gloves to Mrs. Lee.

PRESTON *(with pondcrous humour)*. She caught you napping, eh?

BRENT. Eh? . . . Oh, I don't mean what you mean! I lost 'em to her at snooker.

(PRESTON drops down stage L.)

PRESTON. Ah, I see. She's a good player, then?

BRENT. Not so much a good 'un as I'm a bad 'un.

PRESTON. You've played with her before, of course?

BRENT. No.

PRESTON. But this isn't the first time that you've met, is it?

BRENT. Yes.

PRESTON. H'm. *(A brief pause.)* By the way, Brent, I'm afraid I was a bit hasty with you this afternoon.

(BRENT looks up at him in blank astonishment.)

BRENT. I say, what are you after?

PRESTON? I'm not after anything at all!

(*He gulps down his indignation and moves over to BRENT at the table.*)

I just wanted to say to you that if you could give me some really sound excuse—some reasonable explanation of your conduct, I might be disposed to——

BRENT. Look here! You're not relentin', are you?

PRESTON (*emphatically and instantly*). Certainly not! I was merely going to suggest that you might like to confide in me. There are circumstances in life in which an old head and a generous heart might not be appealed to in vain.

BRENT. Look here, if you're referrin' to my feelin's for your daughter, I call it deuced generous of you, I do indeed.

PRESTON (*"diplomacy" deserting him*). I am *not*, Brent! I am *not* referring to my daughter. I think it only fair to warn you that, after what you are about to hear from my daughter's lips, I consider it extremely unlikely that you will ever speak of your feelings for her again!

BRENT (*utterly bewildered*). Well, I'm—I'm——!

PRESTON. If, sir, you are so brazen——

BRENT. B—brazen!

PRESTON (*endeavouring to control himself*). I should have said if you are so reckless as to miss this opportunity of begging my advice—possibly even my assistance—I—I am sorry for you—extremely sorry.

(*BRENT drops down stage R., and surveys PRESTON in supreme astonishment.*)

BRENT (*after a brief silence*). D'you know, I haven't the faintest notion what I ought to say. I've no doubt it's very stupid of me, and all that, but I haven't the dimmest, remotest, foggiest idea what you've been talkin' about.

PRESTON (*turning away L.*). Then all I've got to say to you, sir, is that you must be more of a fool than a knave.

BRENT. I say, I don't know if you know it, but you're bein' beastly rude!

PRESTON (*turning back R.*). And when my daughter has explained matters, as——

(MOLLY *re-enters by the door.*)

as she is about to do, you will—er—er——

(*He hesitates, and glares vindictively at BRENT.*)

(MOLLY *looks from one man to the other. She divines that all is not as it should be.*)

MOLLY (*moving down to PRESTON at L.*). What have you been saying, father?

BRENT. Yes, what *have* you been sayin', father?

PRESTON. Well—er—er——

MOLLY. Daddy, leave me to talk to Mr. Brent.

(*She crosses to the fireplace.*)

PRESTON (*grudgingly*). Oh, very well, very well.

(*He turns towards the door.*)

BRENT. I say, if you're really goin', you might take my cue, and console Mrs. Lee for a while. I left her badly in the lurch, y'know.

PRESTON (*very stiffly*). I will request Mrs. Lee to excuse you.

(*He takes BRENT's cue from him, and goes out.*)

(*There is an awkward pause before BRENT says uncomfortably—*)

BRENT (*at R.C.*). I—I suppose you want me to explain about this afternoon?

MOLLY (*coldly, despite herself*). This afternoon? No—what is there to explain?

BRENT (*down R.*). Oh, nothing—only—I thought perhaps—— (*He decides not to pursue the subject.*) I

say, Molly, what's the matter with your father? I never was so—well, upon my word, he——!

MOLLY. He's worried.

BRENT (*leaning against the back of the chair at the desk*). He's worried me.

MOLLY (*laughing a trifle nervously*). Kit, you know how funny father is.

(*She comes to L. of the table.*)

BRENT. Yes, it's a humour all his own. What's his latest?

MOLLY. He's—he's—— (*She laughs again a little more hysterically.*)

BRENT (*looking at her quietly*). Well?

MOLLY (*as she seats herself L. of the table*). Oh, it's too absurd for words!

BRENT. Sure to be. But what is it?

MOLLY. Spies! He's got them on the brain.

BRENT (*as he lights his pipe*). Spies on the brain! . . . What a nasty place to have them!

MOLLY. He even suspects that there's one in this house.

BRENT (*hugely amused*). No! You don't mean that? Ha! Ha! By Jove, now, that really is funny!

(*They both laugh—he heartily, she very hysterically.*)

MOLLY. Yes, it's—it's very funny, isn't it?

BRENT (*crossing to R. of the table*). Toppin'!

MOLLY. Of course, you don't think it's possible?

BRENT. Well, everything's possible, of course, but I should say that it's extraordinarily unlikely. Whatever's put the idea into his head?

MOLLY. It's Carl Sanderson.

BRENT. Carl Sanderson! . . . Oh, nonsense!

MOLLY. No, no, I don't mean that he suspects him, but Mr. Sanderson has lost a very important document—State document.

BRENT (*seating himself R. of the table*). Has he, by Jove!

MOLLY. And of course it's—it's very awkward.

BRENT. Must be—poor chap! When did he miss it?

MOLLY. I don't know—some time to-day, I suppose.

BRENT. H'm—that's queer!—I'll bet I know who your father thinks it is.

MOLLY. Who?

BRENT. Why, poor old Fraulein Schroeder.

MOLLY. No, he doesn't suspect Fraulein Schroeder.

BRENT. *Not* Fraulein Schroeder! . . . Well, then, of course, it's Fritz. But—dash it all—he's——

MOLLY. It isn't Fritz.

BRENT. *Not* dear old Myrtle?

MOLLY. No, no!—Oh, Kit, can't you guess?

BRENT. Well, I've been through all the starters, and there's only—ha, ha! By Gad, you *don't* mean me?

MOLLY (*very gravely, as she leans towards him over the table.*) Yes, you!

BRENT (*roaring with laughter, as he rises and crosses R.*). Oh, I say, that's priceless—the greatest compliment I've ever had paid to me! Ha, ha!

MOLLY. They suspect Mrs. Lee, as well.

(*All the laughter dies from BRENT's face—he becomes suddenly grave.*)

BRENT. Eh? (*He comes to the bottom of the table.*) Why do they drag in Mrs. Lee?

MOLLY. Oh, it's only guesswork so far.

(*She rises and faces him with just a suggestion of defiance.*)

But I can *prove* that she's a spy!

BRENT (*astounded*). What!

MOLLY (*below the table*). Kit, you're in her power!

BRENT (*as if the suggestion were too ridiculous for words*). My dear girl——!

MOLLY. Oh, do tell me the truth! You told me that you'd never met Mrs. Lee before.

(BRENT comes very close to her.)

BRENT. Look here, little woman, let's understand one another. You think that I'm in Mrs. Lee's power. You think that she's a German spy. What makes you think that?

(MOLLY turns away from him L.)

MOLLY. I know it.

BRENT. How do you know it?

MOLLY (*facing right about*). I found *this* in her room. (*She takes a paper from her dress and hands it to him.*) Do you know what it is?

BRENT (*non-committally*). It looks like a map.

MOLLY. It is a map. It's the one that Carl Sanderson lost.

(BRENT looks steadily into her eyes as he gives the paper back to her. Not all his love for her can keep from his voice a suggestion of half-incredulous contempt.)

BRENT. And you—you stole it from Mrs. Lee's room.

MOLLY (*brokenly but defiantly*). Everything's fair in love and war. This is both love and war.

BRENT (*after a brief pause*). How did you know that Mrs. Lee had it?

MOLLY. I found out by an accident. When I passed Mrs. Lee's room, coming down to dinner, the door was open. As I stopped to speak to her, I noticed her take something—I thought it was a letter—from her dress, and slip it into a little drawer. I couldn't help noticing that she looked nervous and uncomfortable when she caught sight of me. I just wondered why—and that was all. But when father told me about Mr. Sanderson's loss, I remembered, and—well, you know the rest.

BRENT. So you—you think that I'm in this?

MOLLY. What else *can* I think?

BRENT. What's your father going to do?

MOLLY. If you can't clear yourself—— Oh, you know what father is!—he'll go straight to the police and have you arrested.

BRENT (*returning, for the moment, to his pose of good-natured noodle, as he turns down stage R.*). I see. That would be awkward—very awkward and unpleasant.

(MOLLY takes a step towards him.)

MOLLY. Kit, you *must* tell me!

(*After a pause, during which obviously he has been thinking hard, BRENT comes back to the table.*)

BRENT. Have you said anything to Mrs. Lee?

MOLLY. No.

BRENT. Then you mustn't.

MOLLY. Why not?

BRENT. I gave that paper to Mrs. Lee.

(MOLLY steps back in horror.)

MOLLY. You gave it to her! . . . Knowing what it was?

(BRENT turns away R. to avoid meeting her eyes.)

BRENT. Knowing what it was.

MOLLY (*with a piteous cry*). Oh!

Brent (*above the table and R. of it*). But she didn't. She's quite innocent.

(MOLLY stands in front of the chair L. of the table. She faces him.)

MOLLY. Then it's true. You are a spy!

(BRENT'S silence gives consent to the accusation.)

(MOLLY sinks into the chair beside her. Her head droops upon her arms, outstretched upon the table. She weeps violently.)

(*There comes a pause, during which BRENT'S resolution is badly shaken.*)

(*He braces himself to suffer the ordeal, and, moving*

across the stage C. down L. to her, he lays his hand upon her shoulder.)

(With a sudden convulsive movement, MOLLY sits erect, her clenched fists pressed to her temples. Suddenly she flings them down on to her knees.)

MOLLY. Kit, I don't believe you. You're not telling me the truth. You're saying this to shield her.

BRENT *(down L. of her)*. No, no !

(MOLLY springs to her feet and faces him.)

MOLLY. I'm just beginning to understand. Tell me the truth——

(The door opens and MIRIAM comes in. She is altogether unaware of the turn that things have taken and is in radiant mood.)

—How long have you known Mrs. Lee ?

MIRIAM *(brightly)*. Talking about me ?

(She drops down R. of the table.)

MOLLY. Yes. I was asking Mr. Brent to tell me truthfully, exactly how long he has known you.

MIRIAM. Oh, I can answer that. Let's see now——

(She counts on her fingers oblivious of BRENT's warning glances.)

One—two—three—four—five—six—yes ; twenty-six hours.

MOLLY *(at C. below the table)*. That isn't true !

MIRIAM. Really ! *(She catches BRENT's eye at last.)* Is anything the matter ?

BRENT. Mr. Sanderson has lost some valuable papers, and they have been traced to—to one of us.

MIRIAM *(beginning to grasp the position)*. Oh !

MOLLY. They were found in your room.

BRENT. Yes, they were those I gave to you.

(There is a tense silence, broken at length by MIRIAM

with a little laugh. From now until the end of the scene she adopts the rôle of adventuress, and plays it for all it is worth.)

MIRIAM. I see. And you, you dear, chivalrous person, have let it be thought, I suppose, that *you* stole them.

(MOLLY looks at BRENT. MIRIAM sends a hasty signal to BRENT to leave the situation to her. He obeys—but only with very great reluctance.)

How perfectly delicious of you!

MOLLY. Mr. Brent says that he took the papers, and that he gave them to you—but that you had no idea at all what they were. He's just told me.

MIRIAM. Yes; I'm sure he has.

(All the antagonism of primitive woman for her rival burns in MOLLY'S breast. She turns upon MIRIAM almost savagely.)

MOLLY. What do you mean? Why do you talk of him like that, as if he—*belonged* to you? (She goes right up to her.) I want to know what it means—what is Kit to you?

MIRIAM. One of my very oldest friends.

(MOLLY turns immediately to BRENT.)

MOLLY (*accusingly*). You told me that you had never met Mrs. Lee before!

MIRIAM. Yes, because I asked him to.

MOLLY. I was speaking to you, Kit. Can't you answer for yourself?

MIRIAM. I shouldn't advise it—if you want to hear the truth.

(Once more does MOLLY turn upon her. Her eyes flash fire.)

MOLLY. You mean he'd lie to me. I don't believe it! (She appeals to BRENT.) Would you lie to me, Kit?

BRENT (*awkwardly*). No, no, of course, I——
MIRIAM. He's lying now.

(BRENT moves up stage L. over to the Chesterfield.)

MOLLY (*to MIRIAM—furiously*). Oh, how dare you? How dare you say that?

(MIRIAM'S answering smile is compound of pity and contempt. It is the smile that the woman of the world bestows upon the ingénue who has come into conflict with the facts of life for the first time, and is incredulous and resentful of them. She moves slowly over towards MOLLY, and half sits upon, half leans against the table C., facing the audience. She speaks in the same indulgent tone that she might employ in dealing with a fractious child.)

MIRIAM. Because it happens to be true. Mr. Brent, Miss Preston, is one of those strange men who would sooner commit almost any crime than give a woman away. They count that the one unpardonable sin. Funny, isn't it? And very rare—but I don't know where women like me would be without them.

(BRENT, up L.C., above the table, gives an exclamation of impatience. His whole being rebels against the course that MIRIAM is adopting, but his common sense compels him to see that it is the one way for him out of an impasse. He falls into line with her, therefore, but it goes very much against the grain to have to do so.)

MOLLY. You've got Kit in your power!

MIRIAM. A little, perhaps. . . . When you've grown to know as much of the world as I do, Miss Preston, you'll realize that any woman can get a man into her power so long as he likes her a little, and she can make him feel sorry for her.

(BRENT moves to the window.)

MOLLY (*pitifully*). I don't understand.

MIRIAM. I'll try to explain. It was in South Africa that I first met Mr. Brent.

MOLLY. Ah! So it was South Africa!

(She turns away and, crossing over to the fireplace, seats herself in the armchair beside it.)

MIRIAM. I was married to a farmer in Rhodesia. Even to think of my married life makes me—brrr! *(She shudders.)* Then Mr. Brent came along, and he was sorry for me. He gave me money so that I could run away. He got me work in Cape Town. But that wasn't sufficient. I was ambitious—I wanted to be rich. I wanted to live—really live! I wanted excitement, and—oh, all the things that a woman like me does want. The opportunity came, and I took it. Then I wanted a dupe. I couldn't help thinking of Mr. Brent—I tried not to—but he looked the part so well.

(MOLLY springs to her feet with an exclamation of anger and disgust.)

MOLLY. Oh!

(BRENT paces the stage, his nerves on edge.)

MIRIAM. I made use of him. It was so easy. He asked no question. He—he just believed in me.

MOLLY. And if it hadn't been for me, you'd have gone on using him.

MIRIAM. I suppose so.

MOLLY. He was ready to take your guilt upon himself. Why didn't you let him?

MIRIAM. Because it wouldn't have saved me. Otherwise——

(She shrugs her shoulders, and turns away R. towards the desk. BRENT comes to the top of the table.)

MOLLY. I think you must be the wickedest woman in the world.

BRENT. No, no, Molly, please——!

MOLLY *(turning upon him in amazement and indigna-*

tion). Kit! You'd still stand up for her?—after what she's said!

MIRIAM. Oh, don't be cross with him. I think it's really rather beautiful.

(*A pause. BRENT moves nearer to the door.*)

Well, have you got the handcuffs, Miss Preston? . . . No? . . . Then hadn't you better go and tell Mr. Sanderson that you've found the spy, and that she's quite ready to confess to him?

(MOLLY *hesitates. She moves towards BRENT, looking towards him for guidance.*)

MIRIAM. Oh, no, you mustn't take him with you. You must ask him to keep guard over me. Otherwise what's going to stop me from escaping?

MOLLY (*ignoring her completely*). Shall I go, Kit?

BRENT (*very uncomfortably as he opens the door for her*). Yes, dear, I—I suppose you'd better.

(MOLLY *goes out.*)

(*The moment that the door has closed upon her, BRENT hastens down to L. of the table, and exclaims with really deep feeling—*)

Oh, Miriam, what have you done?

MIRIAM. The only thing that could be done.

BRENT (*before the fireplace*). Gad! It was magnificent!—But why?

MIRIAM (*as she crosses to him*). Sh! . . . Tell me, who found the plan in my room?

BRENT (*with reluctance*). Molly!

MIRIAM. I thought so! D'you know, Kit, I'd sooner be up against almost any antagonist than a girl in love.

BRENT. What beats me is why you left the plan about. Why didn't you lock it up?

MIRIAM. Experience has taught me that the best way to hide a thing is to leave it about. In ninety-

nine cases out of a hundred it succeeds. This happens to be the hundredth.

BRENT. But why defend me?

MIRIAM. It had to be done. If they'd taken you away, what would have happened to all of us?

BRENT. They couldn't have touched me.

MIRIAM. Yes, they could. Preston's a magistrate. He'd have had you arrested on suspicion. *(She moves over to the table and sits down.)* You couldn't have done anything before the morning, and then it would have been too late.

BRENT. But it's going to be so deucedly unpleasant for you! *(He paces up and down stage L.)* My God, what are we going to do?

(A possible "way out" occurs to him. He leans over the table towards MIRIAM and lays his hand on hers. There is suppressed excitement in his voice.)

Miriam, you remember me once telling you that the German spy system is arranged in such a way that one spy may meet another without having any idea of it?

MIRIAM *(ponderingly)*. Well?

BRENT. Well—that's all you want to know!

(A sudden comprehension comes to MIRIAM. She lays her disengaged hand upon his.)

MIRIAM. Kit!

BRENT. Are you sure of yourself? Can you do it?

MIRIAM. Trust me.

BRENT. I will.

(He returns to the fireplace.)

(The door opens and CARL comes in.)

CARL. I understand that you have something to say to me, Mrs. Lee.

MIRIAM. Yes.

(CARL moves over to the windows, and draws the curtains across them. MIRIAM turns to BRENT.)

Leave us together, will you?

(BRENT bows, and goes out immediately.)

(CARL advances down stage to R.C. below the table.)

(MIRIAM is at L.C. below the table, her back half-turned to the audience. These positions are retained to the fall of the curtain.)

CARL. So you're the spy.

MIRIAM. Does it surprise you?

CARL. Not altogether. But—well, I'm very sorry.

MIRIAM. Why?

CARL. I don't like fighting against women.

(A pause. MIRIAM merely shrugs her shoulders. CARL seems to be making up his mind, and eventually continues, with resolution.)

Look here, I'll make things easy for you, if you'll be quite square with me.

MIRIAM. What does that mean?

CARL. One of the documents that I lost has been recovered. There are others. Where are they?

MIRIAM (smiling quietly). Beyond your reach.

CARL. That remains to be seen. Where are they?

MIRIAM. I'm sorry that I can't give you precise information—but they're somewhere in Germany.

CARL (utterly flabbergasted). In——? But——! Look here, who the devil are you?

MIRIAM. One of the Fatherland's most humble, but most devoted servants.

CARL. But—Mein Gott!—you surely can't mean that—that—you—we——? . . . Well, I'll be damned!

THE CURTAIN FALLS.

(Follows a brief interval of one moment to mark the passage of time.)

SCENE II

SCENE.—*The same. Three hours have passed.*

(BRENT, PRESTON and PENNICUIK occupy the room. PENNICUIK, who sits in the chair at the head of the table, facing L., is already in possession of a whisky-and-soda. His rifle is propped against the table, and his "British Warm" hangs upon the chair L. of it.)

(PRESTON has established himself upon the Chesterfield, and is holding out his glass to BRENT, who stands behind the couch and beside the small table at the back of the stage L., about to squirt the soda into it.)

BRENT. Say when !

PRESTON. Whoa ! Whoa ! Thank ye ! Mustn't drown the miller, you know.

(BRENT turns back to the table, and puts the siphon down upon it. He helps himself to a drink. PRESTON lifts his glass in the direction of PENNICUIK.)

Well, here's good luck to you, my boy.

BRENT (*doing likewise*). By Jove, yes—chin-chin, General.

PENNICUIK. Thanks very much. Chin-chin.

(*They pause for refreshment.*)

PENNICUIK (*putting his glass upon the table*). I say, you know, you have bowled me out about Mrs. Lee. I simply can't get over it.

PRESTON. No ; bit of a shock, isn't it ?

BRENT. *Bit* of a shock ! If you only knew what an almighty ass I feel—— !

PRESTON (*chuckling*). Yes, she had you all right,

Brent. Very clever the way she played you up—very clever!

BRENT. H'm! Well, it's taught me a lesson I shan't forget.

(Warning clock strike.)

PENNICUIK. What are they going to do with her?

(PRESTON rises and drops down stage L. to the fireplace.)

PRESTON. Don't think they've decided at present. Sanderson seems inclined to hush the matter up.

(BRENT takes PRESTON'S place upon the Chesterfield.)

PENNICUIK. But he can't do that—surely?

PRESTON. Oh well, I don't know, you know. It's very awkward—a woman, and all that sort of thing.

BRENT. I can't help thinking that Sanderson's right. He's got his papers back. She's been found out. She can't do any more damage down here.

PENNICUIK. No, not down here, perhaps. But what's to prevent her playing exactly the same game somewhere else?

PRESTON. Yes, yes. There is that to be thought of.

PENNICUIK. One can't afford to be chivalrous in a case of this sort. There's too much at stake. For the sake of sparing one woman you may sacrifice the lives of a hundred thousand men.

PRESTON. I think you're putting it a little strongly, Pennicuik, but, at the same time, I can't help feeling there's a lot in what you say. I must mention it to Sanderson. But in any case there's nothing to be done until the morning.

(The clock in the hall outside strikes the half-hour.)

PRESTON. Hullo! What's that?

BRENT *(facetiously)*. Don't you know? That's a clock.

(PRESTON smiles painfully and consults his watch.)

PRESTON. Half-past eleven! Gracious me, I must be off. (*Moves over to PENNICUIK.*) "Early to bed," you know—that's always been my motto. (*He shakes hands with him.*) Good-night to you, my boy. I hope you've got a good thick coat with you. You'll find it a bit chilly on the cliff, you know.

(*PENNICUIK, who rose from his chair when he shook hands with PRESTON, pushes it under the table. He picks up his coat, drops down stage L. and stands before the fireplace as he puts it on.*)

PENNICUIK. Oh, I shall be all right, thanks.

PRESTON (*at the door*). Good-night, Brent.

(*BRENT crosses to him, and shakes hands.*)

PRESTON. I'm very glad to find that I was mistaken about—er—you know . . . I owe you—er——

BRENT. Well, let's settle up in the morning, shall we?

PRESTON (*mystified*). Eh?

BRENT (*with his blandest smile*). Good-night.

PRESTON. Um—er—um—good-night.

(*He goes out much puzzled.*)

(*BRENT closes the door behind him, and turns the key in the lock. PENNICUIK looks at him in amazement. He does not recognize the alert and authoritative individual who now addresses him.*)

BRENT. Now, Pennicuik!

PENNICUIK. I say——!

BRENT (*down stage R. below the table*). You want to know why I locked the door. I'm just going to tell you. Do you know anything about wireless telegraphy?

PENNICUIK (*moving C. to the table*). No, but——

BRENT. Wait a minute. You've read in the papers of course about the use that German spies are making of it in this country?

PENNICUIK. Yes.

BRENT. You know, too, that they're up to all sorts of dodges to conceal it.

PENNICUIK. Yes.

BRENT. Ever seen one of 'em?

PENNICUIK. No.

BRENT. Like to?

PENNICUIK. Yes.

BRENT. Right.

(He crosses over to the fireplace and touches the spring that reverses the grate. The Marconi apparatus comes into view. PENNICUIK starts back in amazement.)

PENNICUIK. Good Lord! Have you told Sanderson about it?

BRENT. No need to. He knows all about it. It's his.

(A shadow of perplexity crosses PENNICUIK's brow, then he looks relieved.)

PENNICUIK. His? . . . Oh, I see—an Admiralty thing.

(He takes a step forward.)

BRENT. No.

PENNICUIK *(stepping back again)*. But you can't mean——?

BRENT. I do. Carl Sanderson's a German spy; so is his mother, so is Fritz; and so is Fraulein Schroeder.

PENNICUIK. Good God! . . . What about Mrs. Lee?

BRENT. That's all bluff. She's working with me.

PENNICUIK. Then you——?

BRENT. I'm on their track. To satisfy yourself that I'm telling the truth, just cast your eye over these.

(He takes some official-looking papers from his pocket and passes them to PENNICUIK—then swings the grate back into its accustomed position.)

PENNICUIK (*looking up from the papers and speaking as though in the presence of his superior officer*). By Jove, sir. I'd no idea——

(*He hands the papers back to BRENT and comes automatically to attention.*)

BRENT (*as he hastens up stage L. to the door*). Of course you hadn't. It would have shewn that I didn't know my business if you had.

(*He unlocks the door and comes down to the fireplace again.*)

Now look here, Pennicuik, we're up against a very tough lot. There are big things going to be done to-night. Are you prepared to help?

PENNICUIK (*taking a step towards him*). Give me the chance, sir.

(BRENT subjects him to a rapid and close scrutiny before he answers him abruptly.)

BRENT. I will. (*He goes up to him.*) The Sander-sons have arranged to burn this house to-night.

PENNICUIK. Good God! Whatever for?

BRENT. Signal to German submarines out in the harbour.

PENNICUIK (*whistling*). Whew!

BRENT. You needn't worry. They won't manage it. But I shall.

PENNICUIK (*amazed*). Burn the house?

BRENT (*laughing*). No, no—send a signal.

PENNICUIK. What to, sir?

BRENT. To a couple of British destroyers which'll be waiting in the harbour for those submarines.

PENNICUIK (*with immense enthusiasm*). By Gad! That's fine!

(BRENT moves over to the window, draws one of the curtains slightly aside, peers out into the night, and returns C. above the table.)

BRENT. It's the only way of letting 'em know when they'll come to the surface. Mustn't scare 'em with searchlights before then. . . . Have they taught you the Morse flash?

PENNICUIK. More or less, sir.

BRENT. You can read it?

PENNICUIK. I think so.

(BRENT takes from his waistcoat pocket the small electric lamp that he used in Act I, and rapidly flashes him a word.)

BRENT. What's this?

PENNICUIK. You're a bit too quick for me, sir.

BRENT. Right, I'll go slower. . . . Got it?

PENNICUIK. I think so, sir. The word was "retire," wasn't it?

BRENT. That'll do. (He goes back to the window.) In half an hour or so, you'll see somebody signalling from this window—by flash, of course. Don't worry, you'll know it's me.

PENNICUIK. Anything else, sir? It's nearly time for me to relieve the sentry.

BRENT (down R. below the table). Anything else? By George, I should think there is! You're not keen on becoming a corpse just yet, I take it.

(PENNICUIK laughs lightly as he moves towards him.)

PENNICUIK. No, not exactly!

BRENT. The Sandersons didn't mean to give you any option.

PENNICUIK (startled). Eh?

BRENT. From your place on the cliff you might very easily have seen a flame and given the alarm before the house was properly alight. That wouldn't have suited their book at all. Sot it was arranged that Fritz should—well——

PENNICUIK (aghast). What!

BRENT. Make sure that you didn't.

PENNICUIK (under his breath). My God!

BRENT. They'll still attempt it, so you must keep your eyes open, and if anybody fails to answer your challenge, you must shoot at once—and shoot to kill!

PENNICUIK. Look here, sir, I simply don't know how to thank you. If it hadn't been for you——

BRENT (*up to window, pulls down-stage curtain aside, opens window*). Don't you worry about that. You get off to your place, and see that you keep your eyes and ears well open.

(*He goes up to the window, and having drawn the down-stage curtain sufficiently aside to allow of PENNICUIK'S passage, opens the window.*)

PENNICUIK (*joining him at the window*). You can trust me for that, sir. . . . Good luck to you.

BRENT. And to you.

(PENNICUIK goes out.)

(*Having closed the window, and readjusted the curtains, BRENT crosses to the small table upon which he left his tumbler, and finishes his drink. Then he moves over to the fireplace, and having secured his pipe from the mantelpiece, strolls across to the table C., and selects a magazine to take to his room. He yawns prodigiously, gives a final glance round the room, and then turns to the door and switches out the lights. As he goes out of the room, FRITZ enters it. They bump into one another. FRITZ makes haste to conceal behind his back a box that he is carrying.*)

BRENT. Hello, Fritz! I'm just off to bed. Good-night.

FRITZ (*standing aside to let him pass*). Good-night, sare.

(*He moves over to the small table R., lights the electric lamp that stands upon it, and carries it across to the table C. By the light that it throws he examines the box that he brought in with him. He opens it, looks into it and chuckles. The latch of the door clicks and he starts back with an exclamation of alarm.*)

CARL (*standing in the doorway*). Now then ! What the devil are you afraid of ?

(*He closes the door.*)

FRITZ. Pardon, sare. Vot happen to-day it make me nervous.

(*CARL gives a mocking laugh, and switches on the light.*)

CARL. Tscha ! . . . All gone to bed ?

FRITZ (*as he carries an empty glass from the c. table to the small table L.*). Every von.

CARL. You're sure ?

FRITZ. Certain.

CARL. The eye-glassed idiot ?

FRITZ. Shust now I meet 'im as 'e go up stairs.

(*He switches out the lamp upon the c. table.*)

CARL. Good !

(*He walks over to the window, and peers through the curtains.*)

Now, about this fellow on the cliff—can you make sure ?

FRITZ. I make him sure.

CARL. No noise !

FRITZ. Oh no. (*He makes a gesture as if stabbing a man.*) Shust dat !

CARL (*down R.C.*). That's it ! Car ready ?

FRITZ. Yes.

(*At the sound of approaching footsteps, CARL motions to FRITZ to conceal himself behind the window curtains, and having switched out the lights, stands alert with his back to the wall, his hand upon the switch. The door opens, and MRS. SANDERSON enters, followed by FRAULEIN SCHROEDER. They are dressed as for motoring.*)

MRS. SANDERSON. Oh ! He's not here.

CARL. Yes, I am, mater.

(*He switches up the light again.*)

MRS. SANDERSON. Oh, what a start you gave me !
 (CARL *clicks his fingers, and FRITZ comes out from behind the curtains.*)

CARL. Sorry, but I thought it might be somebody else.

MRS. SANDERSON (*at L.C.*). Is everything ready ?

CARL (*down the stage R.*). Yes. . . . Where's Mrs. Lee ?

MRS. SANDERSON. In the car—waiting for us.
 (FRAULEIN *moves across stage in front of the table to CARL.*)

FRAULEIN. Oh, she is wonderful, our new-found sister, so full of thought, so quick ! But an hour ago we tell her of our plan, and already she find for us an escort.

(MRS. SANDERSON *advances to L. of the table.*)

MRS. SANDERSON. An armed escort.

CARL (*amazed*). Who ?

FRAULEIN. Two friends she have had all the time near by—comrades with us in the great cause.

CARL. Gad ! That's good work ! (*He walks to the top of the table.*) Fritz, glasses !

(FRITZ *brings from the small table by the door a tray containing a decanter and three liqueur glasses, and places it upon the centre table.*)

FRAULEIN (*at R. of the table*). I tell you, Carl, that she is wonderful—the chief of all of us. (*She lays her hand upon the box by the lamp.*)

CARL (*suddenly and with emphasis*). Tcht ! You mustn't touch that !

(FRAULEIN *steps back hastily.*)

FRAULEIN. How you make me to jump ! What is it ?

CARL (*as he pours the liquor from the decanter into*

the glasses). The incendiary bomb I was telling you about.

MRS. SANDERSON. It is set?

CARL. No, I shall time it to explode before I join you.

(He turns to FRITZ and signs to him to bring another glass. FRITZ obeys. He holds out the glass towards CARL, who fills it from the decanter.)

(In silence the four turn towards the east—their faces to the window, their backs to the audience. In silence they raise their glasses, and drink a solemn toast.)

(CARL is the first to break the spell. He turns back to the table, and places his glass upon the tray. The others follow his example.)

CARL. Now you must leave me.

(He comes down L.C. to MRS. SANDERSON, who takes his face between her hands, and drawing down his head, kisses him upon the forehead.)

MRS. SANDERSON. My son, for this night's work our Emperor will bestow upon you the Iron Cross.

(The prospect does not seem to overwhelm CARL with enthusiasm. He lifts his mother's hands from his shoulders, and draws away from her.)

CARL. You really must go. It's getting very near the time.

(She advances to the door and turns to him again.)

MRS. SANDERSON. I go, my son. The Good God be with you.

FRAULEIN *(as she joins MRS. SANDERSON)*. Auf wiedersehn.

CARL. Auf wiedersehn.

(FRITZ holds open the door, and MRS. SANDERSON and FRAULEIN SCHROEDER go out.)

(FRITZ closes the door and CARL turns to him.)

CARL. You'd better be getting busy.

FRITZ (*at the door*). Now?

CARL (*down stage L.C.*). As soon as you like.

FRITZ. I go then, now—to Meester Pennicuik
. . . Ha!

(He chuckles and goes out.)

(CARL is left alone upon the stage. He looks at his watch, then crosses to the door and switches out the lights. From there he moves over to the windows, draws the curtains, and throws the windows open. After gazing out to sea for a few seconds he comes back into the room, and, going down to the desk, takes a pair of binoculars from one of the drawers. He returns to the verandah and sweeps the sea with them. His ears, quickened by apprehension, detect the sound of somebody approaching. He wheels about, and tip-toes down to the desk as swiftly and as silently as a cat. Having replaced the glasses in the drawer, he snatches the lamp from the centre table, and puts it back in its original position. He hastens over to the standard lamp in the corner L., extinguishes it, and crouches down behind the armchair.)

(BRENT enters very quietly by the door. He is in his pyjamas, with a light bath robe thrown over them. His hair is ruffled, but his eyeglass is still glued firmly in his eye. His general appearance would lead one to suppose that he had gone to bed, had been unable to sleep, and had come down in search of a book. He finds his way by the aid of an electric torch. Having closed the door, he pauses and casts the light around the room.)

(A sudden turning of the lamp rays on to his own features indicates that he has observed CARL's presence. He strolls leisurely over to the window, props himself against it, and flashes his message, saying in amused tone, as he makes an end of it—)

BRENT. Poor old Pennicuik !

(CARL *springs erect and covers him with a revolver.*)

CARL (at L.C.) Hands up !

(BRENT *wheels about to face him. He flashes the torchlight on to CARL with his left hand, and in the same moment turns on the switch by the door with his right. The stage is fully illuminated.*)

BRENT. Good Lord ! How you startled me !

(*He lowers his hands.*)

CARL. Keep 'em up, or you're a dead man !

BRENT (*obeying with an idiotic grin*). Not really !

CARL. You hound ! (*He moves rapidly to c. above the table.*) So you are a spy, after all !

BRENT (*knowingly*). Oh, no, you don't. I've been had with that once to-day, already.

(*He endeavours to lower his hands again.*)

CARL. Keep 'em up ! . . . That sort of monkeying may be very clever, but it's no use to you now, my friend.

BRENT. Look here—— !

CARL. Tell me quickly, what were you up to ?

BRENT. I do wish you'd let me put this bally torch down. I'm getting the most horrible cramp.

CARL. Put it down here. (*He taps the table with the muzzle of his revolver.*)

(BRENT *does so, and turns down stage R.*)

BRENT. Thanks—thanks most awfully. (*He shivers.*) Br-r-r ! Devilish cold in this kit. (*His hands stray towards the pockets of his dressing-gown.*)

CARL (down L.). Oh, no, you don't ! . . . Put 'em up !

BRENT. Look here, I'm sick of these Swedish exercises !

CARL. Put 'em up !

BRENT. Oh, all right.

CARL. Now then, what were you signalling for?

BRENT. Signallin'! (*He chuckles delightedly*). How did you guess I was signallin'?

CARL. It's not a bit of use trying to fool me, my friend.

BRENT. But I have fooled you! By Gad, it's a bit of a score takin' you in as well.

CARL. What the devil d'you mean?

BRENT. I say, do let me put my hands down—then I'll tell you.

CARL. All right—but keep 'em away from your pockets. . . . Now then.

(BRENT'S hands stray towards his pockets, but at a sharp word from CARL he quickly draws them away.)

BRENT. Well, you won't say anythin' about it at breakfast, will you?

CARL (*irritably*). No, I won't say anything about.

BRENT. You know young Pennicuik's out on the cliff there?

CARL. Yes.

BRENT. Well, he was braggin' to-day about signallin', and I said I didn't believe he'd had time to get the subject up, and so to prove it I—I just sent him a——

CARL (*quickly*). A message. You understand it, then?

BRENT (*immensely delighted*). Oh, no! Oh, no! That's where the joke comes in. I don't. I only knew the first seven letters. I've sent him a spoof signal, but I'll bet you what you like that he'll pretend to-morrow that he understood it. (*He chuckles gleefully*.) Poor old Pennicuik!

CARL (*relieved*). Oh, so that's it, is it? . . . Well, if I were you I should think twice before I played that sort of prank again. At times like these it's liable to be misunderstood.

BRENT. But—er——

CARL. Damned dangerous, in fact.

BRENT. By Jove, now—is it really? D'you know I never thought of that.

CARL. You wouldn't.

(A pause during which neither man moves.)

Well, hadn't you better be getting back to bed?

BRENT *(turning up stage R.)*. Yes, that wouldn't be a bad idea, but—*(He turns back again)*—half a jiffy. There's a little question that I want to put to you.

CARL *(impatiently)*. What is it?

BRENT. What the deuce are you doin' with that revolver? And why the blazes do you cover a harmless person like me?

CARL *(a trifle disconcerted)*. In my work, Brent, I have to guard myself against all emergencies.

BRENT *(advancing to the table C.)*. But I'm not an emergency.

CARL. Perhaps not—but——

(BRENT catches sight of the box upon the table. His attention is seemingly diverted.)

BRENT. Hullo! What the devil's that?

CARL *(with an inspiration)*. That—that, Brent, is the reason I am armed.

BRENT. Is it indeed? I say, how awfully interestin'!

CARL. This is not the first time that one of those devilish contrivances has found its way into this house.

BRENT. "Devilish contrivances!" . . . I say, you know, that's an awfully hard name to call such an innocent-lookin' little box.

CARL. It may look innocent enough, but—*(impressively)*—Mr. Brent, the safety of this house has been threatened by an unseen hand. In that box is an infernal machine!

BRENT. God bless my soul, you—you don't say so.

(He backs away from the table with an admirable assumption of fear.)

(CARL advances to the table, and lifts the lid of the box.)

CARL. Come and look for yourself.

(BRENT backs away from the table R., raising the collar of his dressing-gown to shield his face.)

BRENT. No, no, no, no—not for the world! . . . I say, you don't think the damned thing'll go off?

CARL. Not at present, but——

(The gleam of a strong searchlight illuminates the room.)

What the devil's that?

BRENT. I say, that's a fine rocket, isn't it?

CARL. Rocket be damned! That's a searchlight—and you know it! Where's it come from?

BRENT *(lamely)*. I don't know.

CARL *(covering him again with his revolver)*. Look here, Brent, I'm not satisfied.

BRENT. I say—pardon my nervousness—but I do wish you wouldn't point that—that damn thing at me.

CARL. Hands up!

BRENT. No, damn it!—not again!

CARL. Hands up! I'm going to make sure.

(BRENT puts his hands up. CARL comes up to him at R.C. below the table. He keeps him covered with his revolver the while he searches him. There is a revolver in the pocket of BRENT'S dressing-gown. CARL finds it.)

CARL. So that's it, is it?

BRENT *(quite coolly, discarding immediately his affected manner)*. That's it.

(CARL takes a step back—a revolver in each hand.)

CARL. Gad! You're a cool-blooded customer.

BRENT. One can afford to be cool-blooded when one's going to win.

CARL. Going to win, eh? In a few moments, my friend, you'll be cold mutton.

BRENT. Nasty simile! May I have a last smoke?

(He fishes out his cigarette-case.)

CARL. By all means.

BRENT. Thanks. *(He lights up.)*

CARL. Smoking under fire, eh? It shall be duly recorded in your obituary notice.

BRENT. So you intend to shoot me?

CARL. Most certainly.

(He lays his own revolver on the L. of the table down stage, and keeps BRENT covered with the one that he discovered in searching him.)

But before I do you will oblige me by telling me what the hell those searchlights mean.

(During the whole of this scene, and until the end of the play, the room is lit up, intermittently, by the beams of searchlights.)

BRENT. I shall be delighted to do so. But you're not going to shoot me, you know.

CARL. Indeed! And why not, pray?

BRENT. For the simple reason that you'd rouse the house, and that, I fancy, is the last thing you wish to do.

CARL. Oh! So you know that, do you?

BRENT. Yes, and quite a lot of other interesting things as well. Diplomacy and espionage are amusing recreations for the man who has to stay at home.

CARL. By Gad, you're a plucky chap! I've half a mind to give you a run for your money.

BRENT. My dear Herr von Mantel, son of General von Mantel, and paid spy of the German Government, that's very generous of you, but I haven't the least

intention of leaving you alone with that ! (*He points to the bomb.*) It might injure a lot of innocent people. It's a recognized method of warfare in your country, I know. But I really cannot permit you to exercise such methods here.

(*He makes a movement forward towards the table.*)

CARL (*fiercely*). Stop where you are ! . . . No nonsense, or I'll drop you with one of your own bullets !

BRENT. And they say the Germans have no sense of humour.

(*The sound of a big gun is heard out at sea. CARL rushes up to the windows. BRENT crosses swiftly to the table and picks up CARL'S revolver. CARL turns from the window.*)

CARL. By God, you—— !

(*The two men face one another with levelled revolvers.*)

Positions : ● CARL.

● BRENT.

BRENT (*at L.*) Shall we call it stale-mate ? Hein !

CARL. Stale-mate be damned ! Here goes for both of us !

(*He moves swiftly down to the table C., and aims point blank at the bomb. The hammer of his revolver clicks, but there is no report.*)

BRENT (*smiling broadly*). Check, in fact ! . . . A loaded revolver, my dear von Mantel, is a bad weapon in the hands of a diplomatist. I never carry one.

(*CARL drops the useless weapon on the table.*)

Sorry to trouble you—but do you mind crossing to your very interesting fireplace, and putting up your hands ?

(*CARL growls, and makes a sudden dart forward. It*

is in his mind to fling himself upon BRENT and overpower him. But his opponent's knowledge of how to use a revolver is evident, as also his determination to employ that knowledge in an emergency, and he is dissuaded from his purpose.)

(He moves sullenly over to the fireplace.)

CARL. Why the devil don't you shoot me ?

(Before BRENT can reply the voice of PENNICUIK is heard to challenge somebody outside.)

PENNICUIK *(off)*. Halt ! *(A second's silence—and then again)* Halt !

(The sound of a rifle shot succeeds.)

CARL. What's that ?

BRENT. A full stop, I hope, put to the dangerous career of Master Fritz !

CARL. Pennicuik !

BRENT. Yes, quite a crack shot, they tell me——

(Again CARL makes as if to fling himself upon him.)

No, no, I shouldn't move if I were you.

(A tense silence is broken by the dull boom of naval guns. CARL stirs uneasily.)

BRENT. Like to know what that is ? . . . No ? . . . Well, it's nothing very exciting. . . . A little practice for our gunners at a moving target.

CARL. God ! So that's it ! Your signals !

BRENT. You've got it. Submarines, you know, are tricky things to hit.

(Maddened by rage and mortification, CARL springs forward.)

BRENT *(extending his revolver so that it points straight at CARL's heart)*. Stand still !

CARL. For God's sake shoot me, and have done with it !

(From just outside the window somebody gives the command "halt!" Rifle butts are grounded on the verandah. CORPORAL ATKINS comes into the room. Drawn up on the verandah behind him stand two private soldiers.)

ATKINS (to one of the soldiers). Guard that door.

(The soldier marches over to the door, and stations himself in front of it.)

(ATKINS advances towards BRENT, stops within a few paces of him, comes smartly to attention, and salutes.)

Private Pennicuik's told us what's up, sir.

BRENT (indicating CARL). A German spy. Arrest him.

ATKINS (to soldiers). Escort—your prisoner.

(The two soldiers place themselves on either side of CARL.)

BRENT (to ATKINS at R.C.). Got your other man all right?

ATKINS. Wounded, sir. On his way to hospital.

(Voices are heard about the house.)

CARL (not wishing to be seen by the others). For God's sake, Brent——!

BRENT. All right. (He turns to ATKINS.) Here, you'd better take this bomb with you.

(ATKINS starts back in alarm. The "Tommyes" grin broadly.)

Oh, it's all right. It's not set.

(ATKINS has observed the smiles of the escort. He extinguishes them with a look.)

ATKINS (to soldiers). Prisoner and Escort. Right—tu-r-r-n! Quick—marr-r-r-ch!

(CARL and the soldiers file out by the window.)

(ATKINS follows, carrying the bomb.)

(*The door is flung open and MOLLY rushes into the room. She is in her night-attire, with a wrap hastily flung over it. Her hair is uncontrolled and streams over her shoulders. She hastens down to BRENT in affright, and clings to him.*)

MOLLY. Kit! Kit! What is it? What is it?

BRENT (*soothing her*). There, there. It's all right, little woman.

(*PRESTON enters. He wears an ordinary overcoat over his nightshirt. He comes down in his accustomed pompous fashion R. of the table.*)

PRESTON. Now, sir! What's all this mean?

(*MISS MYRTLE in flannelette nightdress and Jaeger dressing-gown, her scanty locks twisted into pathetic pigtails, hurries into the room, carrying a lighted candle. She patters down to PRESTON and clings to him hysterically.*)

MISS MYRTLE. It's the Germans! It is indeed! They've captured Mr. Sanderson! I saw them from my window.

PRESTON (*disengaging himself*). Don't be a fool, woman. . . . Now, Brent.

(*MISS MYRTLE collapses into the armchair L. of the fireplace.*)

BRENT. It's quite simple. We've just bagged the lot—spies, you know.

PRESTON. But——

BRENT. The Sandersons, Fritz and Fraulein Schroeder.

PRESTON. But——

MOLLY. And Mrs. Lee? Have they taken her?

BRENT. No; she's taken them.

PRESTON. But——

MOLLY. I don't understand, Kit.

BRENT. Two detectives shadowed Sanderson down from London this morning. That's the escort that Mrs. Lee has provided for them.

MISS MYRTLE. But those guns—those dreadful guns!

BRENT. They're ours—a little game with German submarines.

MOLLY. And we owe all this to you?

BRENT. Oh, it's nothing. It happened to come my way. I couldn't explain before.

MOLLY (*crossing to L.*). Oh, Kit! (*She goes up to her father.*) And that's the man we all sneered at because he stayed at home.

PRESTON. But——

MISS MYRTLE (*who has risen and moved L.C.—almost in the same breath*). But——

PRESTON (*rounding on her*). Damn it!—I will be heard! Don't stand shivering there, woman! You'll catch your death a-cold. Go back to bed!

(*He pushes her towards the door.*)

MISS MYRTLE. There'll be no more sleep for me to-night.

PRESTON. Nonsense! Tuck yourself up and try.
(*He thrusts her out of the room, and turns to BRENT.*)
Now, Brent——

(*Hardly has he got the words out of his mouth before an ear-piercing yell comes from outside, and MISS MYRTLE is heard calling hysterically—*)

MISS MYRTLE (*off*). Mr. Preston! Mr. Preston!

PRESTON. Confound the woman! (*He opens the door again and calls to her.*) Confound the woman! What is it?

MISS MYRTLE. My candle's gone out. I'm all in the dark.

MOLLY. Daddy, you must go to the rescue.

(PRESTON *explodes in a stupendous "oh" and exits by the door.*)

(*There is a slight pause during which their voices are heard "off" in dispute.*)

MOLLY (*at L.C.*). Oh, Kit ! How funny you look !

BRENT. How topping *you* look !

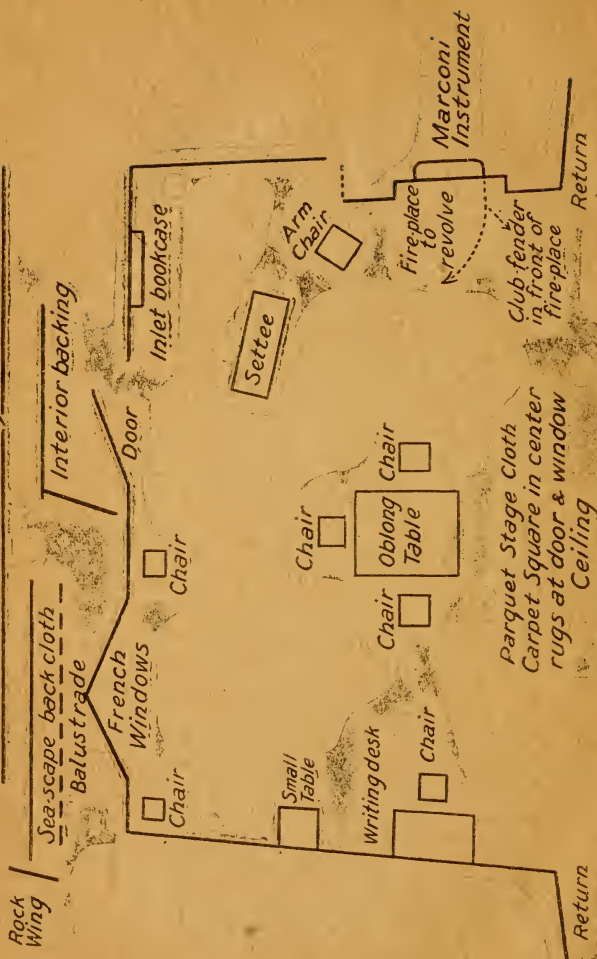
MOLLY (*mischievously*). Don't you think we ought to have a chaperone ?

BRENT. Chaperone ? Chaperone be damned !

(*He takes her in his arms.*)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

"The Man Who Stayed at Home"



Scene & Furniture Plot

PROPERTY PLOT—ACT I.

Plain brown stage carpet.

Aubusson carpet.

2 druggets.

Skin rug at fire.

Black rug at door.

2 sconcers on wall P.S.

Small oblong picture between sconcers P.S.

Black and white drawing up-stage of mantel.

Oblong picture over half-round table up-stage P.S.

2 oval pictures either side of bookcase at back.

2 sconcers on wall O.P.

Mantelpiece.

Revolving fireplace with Marconi apparatus.

Fire :—laid.

Fender.

Fire-irons.

Fire-stool.

On mantel—

2 upright vases.

2 figure vases.

Clock.

Push-light cue for fireplace revolve.

Matches and ash-tray.

Grandfather armchair.

On chair—

Square cushion.

Antimacassar over back of chair.

Half-round table.

On table—

Bronze dancer.

2 pictures in frames.

1 book.

Standard lamp.

In bookcase—

Picture in case.

Books.

Book rolled in red paper.

Deed box.

China plate.
 China shell ornament.
 Picture in frame of Carl.
 Bottom shelf—all books.

Chesterfield—

2 cushions, 1 square and 1 round; antimacassar over back.
 Small oval table at back of Chesterfield.
 Flap-table on wall L. of door.
 Bell-push L. of door. Bell to ring outside.
 Key fixed in lock of door. Lock to be in working order.
 Electric light switch, R. of door, connected with cue light
 off, stage p.s.
 Palm in stand R. of door.
 2 long curtains on brass rod at windows.
 Cords attached to curtains for opening and shutting.
 Window catch.
 2 tip-up window seats either side of window.
 Small oblong table o.p.

On table—

Small portable lamp with green shade.

In up-stage drawer of table—

Binoculars.

Writing desk.

On desk—

Matches and ash-tray.
 Bowl of roses.
 Reference books in case.
 Writing-materials in desk.
 Small.

W.P.B. down stage by desk.

Small chair at desk.

Oblong table at c.

3 small chairs at table c., 1 at top and 1 either side.

Top chair with padded seat.

Table cover on table c.

On table—

Magazines and newspapers.
 Small chairs, armchair, Chesterfield, curtains and window
 seats, all of same colour.
 Stick-gun standing by flap table L. of door.

Off Stage.

For Fraulein, eyeglasses.
 For Preston, eyeglasses in case, watch (own).
 For Miss Myrtle, knitting and small apron.
 For Daphne, small hand basket containing white feathers.
 For Miriam, despatch case containing official blue paper,
 and code book.

For Mrs. Sanderson, duplicate book, hand-bag.
 For Brent, pipe, pouch, pocket-book with pencil, small electric torch, morning racing paper.

PROPERTY PLOT—ACT II.

Furniture and dressing same as Act I.
 Stick-gun discovered by flap table.

Off Stage.

For Fraulein, hand-bag, containing sketch-book, small bottle of tabloids, sealed and stamped envelope, knitting.
 For Miriam, magazine.
 For Fritz, afternoon papers, telegram on salver, duplicate handkerchief, carrier pigeon with message attached to leg.
 For Preston, handkerchief.
 For Carl, despatch vase.
 For Brent, parcel containing prop cigarettes and detectophone, rolled carrier message, duplicate handkerchief with elastic attached.

PROPERTY PLOT—ACT III.

SCENE I.

Furniture and dressing same as previous acts.
 Detectophone rolled and in box on table c.

Off Stage.

For Carl, 2 cigars in case, papers in case, white handkerchief (own).
 For Fritz, blank carrier message.
 For Miss Myrtle, magazine.
 For Molly, map.
 For Brent, billiard cue.

SCENE 2.

Furniture and dressing same as before.
 Stick-gun removed.
 Matches, and ash-tray on desk.
 Papers removed from table c.
 1 magazine left on table c.

On oval table behind Chesterfield—

Tray containing :—

Siphon of soda-water.
 Decanter of whisky.
 4 tumblers.
 1 wine-glass.

On flap table—

Salver containing :—

Decanter of liquor.

3 small liqueur glasses.

Rifle for Pennicuik on table c.

Off Stage.

For Fritz, bomb in box.

For Carl, revolver.

For Brent, revolver, large electric torch, cigarettes in case (own).

For Miss Myrtle, candle in holder and matches.

Three rifles for soldiers.

1 cushion removed from Chesterfield.

LIGHTING PLOT.

ACT I, to open.

*Floats :—*Circuit of white on resistance full up.

Circuit of light amber full up.

*Ceiling batten :—*Circuit of white on resistance full up.

Circuit of light amber full up.

*Lengths :—*1 white above window on resistance.

1 light amber above window on resistance.

1 white on R. of window on resistance.

1 light amber on R. of window on resistance.

1 white on L. of window on resistance.

1 light amber on L. of window on resistance.

2 short white lengths over door.

*Fittings :—*4 2-candle brackets in scene, *not* alight.

1 standard lamp up L., *not* alight.

1 table lamp up R., *not* alight.

Wireless spark in order.

Switch by door connected with signal light on switchboard.

Push for Marconi attached to signal light for revolve.

*Arcs :—*Focus No. 4 amber through window from R.

Ripple arc on sea cloth.

ACT II, to open.

Floats, batten and lengths as in Act I.

Ripple arc as in Act I.

Extra lengths—

1 dark amber or red over window (*not* alight).

1 " " R. of window (*not* alight).

1 " " L. of window (*not* alight).

*Arcs :—*Focus Arc No. 4 amber from L. through window.

At cue :—Entrance of Molly—"Kit, father didn't want——"
Check as follows, occupying eight minutes.

White in floats, batten and lengths on window slowly out.
When white half out, take light amber lengths slowly down
to half, at same time bring up slowly dark amber lengths
or red lengths and change focus arc to red or dark amber.
Ripple remains on.

At cue :—(Carl switches on light), white in floats and batten
up full and four brackets alight. No alteration in lengths.

ACT III, SCENE 1, *to open.*

Floats and batten as in Act I (possibly slightly checked).

Length over door as in Act I.

3 large blue lengths over window and down sides.

Wall brackets alight.

Moonlight ripple from arc on sea cloth.

Flood blue arc on sea cloth.

ACT III, SCENE 2.

As for Act III, Scene 1, but standard lamp up *L. alight*.

Cue 1 (given by signal light). Exit Brent, enter Fritz.

Floats, batten and brackets out.

Cue 2 (given by signal light). Entrance of Carl.

Floats, batten and brackets in.

Cue 3 (given by signal light). After Fritz gets behind curtain.

Floats, batten and brackets out.

Cue 4 (given by signal light). Exit of Mrs. Sanderson and
Fraulein.

Floats, batten and brackets in.

Cue 5 (given by signal light). After exit of Fritz.

Floats, batten and brackets out.

Cue 6 (given by signal light). After "How you startled me."

Floats, batten and brackets in.

Standard lamp out as Carl switches it off.

Table lamp worked by key switch on stage.

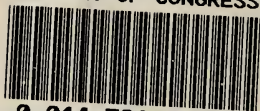
ACT III, SCENE 2.

Arc (Searchlight) Cues.

1. *Brent* :—"You don't think the damned thing's going off,
do you?"—Searchlight quickly up on to sky and then
down across sea and off.
2. *Brent* :—"So you're going to shoot me, are you?"—
Searchlight moved slowly over sea twice and off.
3. *Call off* :—"Halt! Halt!"—Searchlight over sea until
entrance of soldiers, then off.



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